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CUTS IN A PRISM: A MULTI-GENRE EXPLORATION OF GROWTH AS WRITER,
TEACHER AND HUMAN

By

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Bachelor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Studies, Miami University, Oxford Ohio, 1983

Professional Paper

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts
in Integrated Arts and Education

The University of Montana
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ABSTRACT

Warren, Wendy Zagray, M.A., Summer 2012

Integrated Arts and Education

Cuts in a Prism: A Multi-Genre Exploration of Growth as Writer, Teacher and Human

Chairperson: Dr. Jillian Campana

A meditation about how writing can be used as markers of personal and professional growth, this project brings together poems, articles, essays and reflections written over the past four years, woven together with threads of commentary. Taken together, they form a narrative of maturation, as the author's world opens to more consciously include the perspectives of others. Based on a metaphor of a prism, where each cut represents a given perspective based on social position, the author explores the importance of story as means of viewing the world through a different lens. From positions of social advantage, such as the author's own identity as a white, middle class, heterosexual woman of European heritage, people are sometimes unable to see that other cuts in the glass even exist. Through these pieces of writing, newly combined into story, the author, a teacher of twenty-five years, looks back at the learning trajectory leading to where she now stands. From an entry point spurred by Montana's educational mandate known as Indian Education for All, through experiences including intense exploration into Holocaust Education, she emerges to find herself in a new position. As a result of this new learning, in the coming years, her work will come to include teaching at a college level, supporting pre-service teachers in thinking deeply about how issues of race and class might impact the lives and learning of their students. She will also join a research group studying resiliency strategies of young people who have come through difficult circumstances. Through living, learning, writing and reflecting, issues of social justice, both cultural and economic, have risen to the forefront of her work, and this work has now embedded itself into the fabric of her life.

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A Starting Point

During the first week of my intensive graduate work as a student in the Creative Pulse program at the University of Montana, Taylor Mali, teacher and SLAM poet, gave his first performance in Missoula. He read the poem printed below, and I swear he was looking me right in the eye. I knew I had been called once again to write—to speak with conviction about issues that matter. I spent that summer writing poetry and pushing myself to perform my poems, thinking this would become the crux of my Creative Pulse project work.

Totally Like Whatever, You Know?
by Taylor Mali

*In case you hadn't noticed,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you're talking about?
Or believe strongly in what you're saying?
Invisible question marks and parenthetical (you know?)'s
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions? You know?
Declarative sentences - so-called
because they used to, like, DECLARE things to be true
as opposed to other things which were, like, not -
have been infected by a totally hip
and tragically cool interrogative tone? You know?
Like, don't think I'm uncool just because I've noticed this;
this is just like the word on the street, you know?
It's like what I've heard?
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions, okay?
I'm just inviting you to join me in my uncertainty?
What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society become so, like, totally . . .
I mean absolutely . . . You know?
That we've just gotten to the point where it's just, like . . .
whatever!
And so actually our disarticulation . . . ness
is just a clever sort of . . . thing
to disguise the fact that we've become
the most aggressively inarticulate generation*

*to come along since . . .
you know, a long, long time ago!
I entreat you, I implore you, I exhort you,
I challenge you: To speak with conviction.
To say what you believe in a manner that bespeaks
the determination with which you believe it.
Because contrary to the wisdom of the bumper sticker,
it is not enough these days to simply QUESTION AUTHORITY.
You have to speak with it, too.*

I have been teaching 7th grade communication arts, specifically writing and speaking, at Columbia Falls Jr. High in Columbia Falls, Montana. This year, I am on the cusp of a new adventure. In the fall, I will teach undergraduates in Education Studies at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. Preparing for the possibility of this move was my impetus for continuing my graduate work.

During the Creative Writing apprenticeship I took during the first summer of the Creative Pulse, as I experienced the fear and the joy of putting my frustrations, hopes and dreams onto paper and then speaking those words aloud, I also thought of my students. Performance poetry seemed a perfect way to blend many of the skills I am expected to teach with the social justice content to which I am committed. For my Field Project, I planned to work out a scope and sequence of activities that might lead students down these multiple pathways, helping them learn to see the world from many perspectives, developing their own ideas so they might speak their truths and write the world they'd like to see. In this plan, they would then perform their pieces in public, allowing them discover the power of their own voices. I anticipated that for my final project, I would write a professional article about my work with my students and poetry performance.

I also planned to continue writing and revising my own poetry, with an eye toward creating a collection to send to a potential publisher. As a member of the Montana Writing

Project (MWP) leadership team, I have learned first-hand the importance of teacher/artists actively practicing their own art. One of the main tenants of the National Writing Project, of which MWP is a part, is that teachers of writing (that is, *all* teachers) must themselves write. Another key idea is that the best professional development for teachers comes from other teachers (about NWP.org).

As much as I want Taylor Mali's words to speak to my students, I, too, want to have the confidence to "say what [I] believe in a manner that bespeaks the determination with which [I] believe it." After all, it was *me* he was looking in the eye as he performed that poem.

A Commitment to Social Justice

One of the things that attracts me to performance poetry is that many of these writers view their world with a critical eye, especially in the area of social justice. Spoken word poets use their voices to peel back the layers of lies used to conceal injustice, inspiring their audience to imagine a better, more equitable future.

I came to realize that if my project focused primarily on my students' writing, it would be just another way for me to hide. Instead I decided to call up the courage to put my own writing at the center. As a result, this manuscript has developed into a meditation on my growth, both personal and professional, as reflected through my writing. In recent years, much of the focus of my life has involved issues of social justice. Included here are articles, poetry, and personal reflections about this work, woven together into a narrative. Some of the pieces have been drawn from writer's notebooks and computer files of the past few three or four years. I also knew, however, that if I hoped to apply for a position at Berea College, my CV needed to have an impressive list of publications. While I had a start on that list, most of my submissions were not recent. So, in addition to looking back and selecting pieces written over the past few years, I

have also spent this year writing and revising pieces specifically tailored to Calls for Manuscripts from various publications. As a result, some of the pieces in this project have been submitted for publication, others have not. Together, this collection reflects my own deep thinking about my work in the classroom and my position in the world.

My commitment to issues of social justice began early. I was born in 1961; I truly am a child of the sixties. My parents were involved in the Civil Rights Movement and included my younger brother and me in their work. As a young child, I felt I had a personal relationship with Martin Luther King Jr. and all that he stood for, including his opposition to the war in Vietnam and the work to end poverty that became his focus near the end of his life. My family's visit to Resurrection City, the Poor People's campaign planned by Martin Luther King just before his assassination, becomes the starting point for this chapter, written for a book to be titled *The Poor are not the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsmann. This then begins this reflective project with my most recent writing; a personal piece that explores the story of how I came to my commitment to social justice work.

What's a Middle Class White Girl Like Me Doing in a Reflective Place Like This? chapter
submitted (proposal accepted) for *The Poor are not the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsman
by Wendy Zagray Warren

Resurrection City, 1968: Making the Invisible Visible

It takes both hands to pull my skinny leg from the mire to take my next step. As soon as I put my foot down again, I feel it being drawn into the earth. When my foot reaches what seems to be the bottom, the mud is cool. It squishes between my toes. I squeal with delight. I am seven years old, and I have never seen my parents, especially my mother, walking through this much mud.

The Washington Monument looms over us. Tents surround us in every direction on what used to be the grass of the Mall. Boards are propped above some of the tents, a further attempt to keep out the rain that has been falling for days. Some are not tents at all, but shelters constructed of pieces of metal, wood, anything that could be pounded together. The earthy smell of warming mud mixes with the slightly sweet odor of human perspiration. This make-shift city hums with activity: people laughing together inside tents, kids running zigzags in and out of tent poles, people setting up or taking down tents. This is the first

time I have been in Washington, D.C. It is certainly different from Ohio. My dad has tried to explain our trip, but I don't really understand. I know we spent a l.o.o.n.g time in the car to get here.

People here have all different colors of skin, but the mud splattering us makes everyone look the same. We fit right in. I've seen a lot of black people in this city. Where I live, everyone I see is white. Maybe that's why we are here. I know my dad wants us to be with black people sometimes.

As we wander among the tents, I begin to ask questions, beginning with the obvious: "Why are people living in tents in the middle of the city?" I'm not from here, but I know these people do not live on the Washington Mall.

"Do you remember that Martin Luther King Jr. was killed a few months ago?" my dad asks.

"Yes," I say. "He got shot. I saw it on T.V., and you got tears in your eyes when we talked about it at supper." I don't see my dad cry very often, so I remembered that.

"Dr. King planned this while he was still alive. He called it a Poor People's Campaign. People have come from around the country and set up their camps to make sure everyone can see that they are here, that they live in this country, too. Dr. King wanted to be sure the people of our rich nation know that there are citizens who don't have enough to eat, or a good place to live, so together we can try to decide what to do about that. Sometimes, rather than solving a problem, it's easier to pretend it isn't there."

I look around, still confused. "But why are *we* here? We're not poor."

"We're here for a couple of reasons," dad says. "We came because I want Dr. King's plans to succeed. I am so sad he was killed. He was a good man."

I sit by Martin Luther King at every meal. On the wall by our kitchen table, we have a big calendar surrounded with pictures of things that are happening in the world. There is a picture of a skinny girl with big brown eyes and brown, curly hair holding an empty bowl. Dad thinks she looks just like me, and I wonder now if her picture is there because she is poor and hungry—to remind us. There are pictures of the War in Vietnam, and right next to my place is a picture of Martin Luther King. It's sad. I guess there will be no more pictures of him. Why would someone want to kill a person who is trying to help people? So, maybe we're here because of Dr. King.

Not yet satisfied, I ask, "What else?"

"I wanted to be sure all kinds of people are here, even people who aren't poor, because I want the government to see that people in this country care about each other. And I want you and Jim to see that, too. Here, I knew you would learn about all different kinds of people in our country who live in lots of different ways. That's hard to see in North Canton."

That's right...it's easy to see here. I have so many more questions, but we are at the edge of the mud now, ready to cross the street to our car.

I look back at the tents and hear the yells of the kids—all kinds of kids—playing together, sliding in the mud. It makes me want to stay, in a way, but I'll bet it's scary at night. It's strange to be able to just get in our car and drive away. I think about being tucked into a warm bed in a motel at the edge of town. You can't see the city of tents from there. Something about that doesn't seem quite right.

Backpedaling: Who I Am and Why it Matters

I am a white, heterosexual, middle class woman from a Christian background. I have been teaching for twenty-five years. There are many teachers like me.

Looking back at the mud of Resurrection City with adult eyes, seeing that the focus of King's work had expanded from issues of race to include issues of poverty demonstrates the depth of his understanding that, due to the history of racial apartheid in our country, race and class are so closely linked that they must be examined together. The Poor People's Campaign was an attempt to build bonds of commonality between people living in similar economic circumstances; people who were—and are—often divided by ethnicity. To that end, members of American Indian, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, African-American and poor white communities attended the Poor People's Campaign, as well as other followers of Dr. King's work, like my dad. One of the goals of the Poor People's Campaign was to make the invisible visible (ourfuture.org). My father's goal, on a much more personal level, was the same. Dad must have struggled within himself, believing in the possibility of King's ideal of a beloved community, yet choosing instead a "safe" place for us to live, where people were homogeneous—white, middle class, Christian...like us.

Because of this choice, the people and the lifestyles I could see during this trip to Washington D.C. really were almost invisible in my daily life. My actual exposure to other life experiences was surface level, at best, despite my father's instinct to include our family in some of his social justice work. It was all too easy for my thinking to stay fixed in my white, middle class world all the way through college and on into the first fifteen years of my teaching career. I grew up seeing myself and my world as "normal," a view confirmed by everything around me—on T.V., in movies, advertisements and textbooks.

I have plenty of colleagues who would say it doesn't matter at all who *I* am; all that matters is how I treat others. Pretending not to "see" color or social class seems the *modus operandi*. I know now, however, that it does matter. My social position, along with my life experiences, determines my perspective. Having come to maturity seeing the world through only one lens, indeed, not even realizing the possibility of other ways of being, seems common for people from backgrounds considered "normal" in our country: white, heterosexual and middle or upper class. Because people who fit this demographic have been in positions of power throughout the history of our country, it matters a great deal. Our country's institutions have been set up for people like us, which sets us up to be socially and economically privileged. And, speaking for myself, being in these positions of privilege has limited my view. I couldn't see, for example, that these institutions might disadvantage people who don't fit these "norms." I couldn't see that my gain is based on other groups' losses. I had always assumed that my values were held by everyone; that all Americans were striving to live like "us"—and indeed, that each person in our country had equal opportunity to do so. This view is confirmed, after all, by our schools' textbooks, through media of all kinds, in the ways our country's institutions operate, from the financial sector to the judicial system, and in the rhetoric of most politicians, who define the value systems of white, middle and upper class Christians as "American" values. And I bought this, without question, without even recognizing it as an assumption that greatly impacts the decisions I make, and most especially the students I teach.

It matters that I recognize and define my own social position. It matters for my teaching and for my life. Unless I learn to expand my narrow view, I am limited in what I see as possible and desirable. If I can't even see that there are other ways of knowing and being in the world, people whose lives are quite different from my own—by choice or by circumstance—I can't make the best choices for myself, my country, or for my students. This limited view from my positions of privilege can allow me not to even *see* people who make up at least half the population of our nation.

As an educator, it is my job to teach every child in my classroom, honoring all the beautiful diversities among humans. I can't just ignore the parts of my students I don't understand or pass judgment on ways

of being in the world that are different from mine. And yet isn't that so often what happens in schools? Isn't it commonplace to teach "the American way of life," as if there is just one? In choosing that rhetoric, we establish a norm. When the multiple perspectives that make up the diversity of our country's population are missing from the curriculum, from studies of history to conversations about local communities, we will not be able to reach all of our students. Their lives must not only be *represented*, but presented as valuable. Because they *are*.

Current events in the world of education, the banning of Mexican American Studies classes in Arizona, for example, attest to a quite different reality. These actions project fear, as if teaching about the many perspectives that make up our national narrative somehow challenges it. Or is the fear of something much deeper? Research shows that students succeed academically when they see themselves represented in the school curriculum (Coggins Campbell 2008; CHiXapkaid Inglebreit Krebill-Prather 2008). If curriculum materials are mandated to continue to present the European-American, middle class perspective as primary, one has to wonder if the fear is actually based in the possibility of success of specific segments of our population deemed to be "other." Rather than closing the opportunity/"achievement" gap, such moves quite intentionally widen it. The message broadcast is this: if "they" can't win on "our" playing field, well, that's "their" problem. The very thought makes me shudder.

This is the kind of critical thinking that, because of my cultural position, I wasn't even aware I could, I *should*, engage in. I had the privilege of not knowing whose stories were being left out, because *my* story was *told*. When it came to teaching, not having encountered alternative narratives in my own education, I didn't realize that I *had* a cultural position, or that I was teaching from any perspective at all. My goal as an educator, however, is not to reach only students who are "like me," from white, middle class backgrounds, raised with value systems similar to my own. My goal is to empower each of my students. I now realize that in not acknowledging my own cultural position in relationship to other positions perhaps very different from mine, I was actually privileging some learners over others—a very dangerous place in which to find myself.

Ruby, Ruby, Ruby

One of the dangers of this lack of self-awareness about my own social positions, of thinking of my cultural position as "normal," is that it allowed me all too easily to fall prey to stereotypes. In my search for "answers," rather than thinking and reading critically, I became willing to accept simple solutions to complex issues. Poverty was one of those issues. With great hope in my heart, I reached for Ruby Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*.

As I read, I found myself willing to consider the notion that there might just be a "culture" of poverty. I teach in a school where the poverty rate is fairly high. I hadn't considered the idea that some of the struggles my students were experiencing may have been a cultural disconnect related to social class. Many students were struggling with issues that went far beyond the classroom walls, and I was looking for answers. Like many well-intentioned teachers who are drawn to Payne's work, I was hopeful that Ruby could provide them. Ignorance based on hope is still ignorance, and in my hope, I temporarily accepted Payne's deficit model of poverty. Payne writes as if the values and norms of people in a given economic class are similar—and she confidently "reveals" to her readers what those lives are like. Charts in her book are meant to show the very different ways in which people in the lower, middle, and upper classes operate—what they value and ways in which one should interpret their actions. In retrospect, I think about the diversities of peoples I noticed even as a seven year old tromping through the mud in Resurrection City. They may have been of a similar social class, but they came from many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Why did those images not come to my mind when I first read *The Framework*? Why did I not consider the cultural diversities of the groups Payne speaks of as if they are one? I think the answer lies in my own lack of self-exploration. Because I hadn't examined my own social

position before reading Payne's work, I was willing to accept the "hidden rules among the classes" delineated on p 59. I realize now that they fit every stereotype I've ever heard. And they carry a strong message that the "standards" she defines as belonging to middle and upper classes are "correct"—the ones we should teach.

Ruby Payne seems to position herself in the text as an authority on issues of poverty. As a critical reader, I should have been asking how that authority had been granted or earned. Is she, herself, a part of the "culture" she writes about with such authority? And how am I, the reader, positioned in the text? I know now that Payne and I share a position—as people who have not lived in poverty. Therefore, as author and reader journey together, we are viewing people who live in poverty as "the other." Ruby and I are making assumptions and passing judgment on people who are not "like us."

Having been brought up in similar social positions as Ruby Payne, white, middle class, Christian, it was all too easy to accept her guidance as an expert, without noticing that expertise as self-proclaimed. Her observations matched my stereotypes. Her unexamined assumption that middle class values are the "norm" and therefore desirable fit the world-view I held. Until I came to understand the limitations of seeing the world through the narrow lens of my own social position, I neglected to consider what I have always known as a teacher—that there are no shortcuts. My students and their families are individual. It is my responsibility to take the time to know them, to listen to their stories, and, rather than trying to remake them in my own image, to honor the many gifts each brings to our community.

Finding a Prism

Once you've experienced one other way of seeing, you begin to realize there are many different ways to describe the universe, many different ways to transmit knowledge. And then you may begin to think about the fact that while our methods of transmitting knowledge are very good, they can also exclude a great many things, which could be of importance to us.

– (Sandra Lopez, qtd. in Early 42)

Human interactions are complex. Rather than exploring an issue from only one angle, the view from where I stand in the social hierarchy, I am learning to see each issue as a prism. My perspective allows me to see through only one cut of the glass. Such a narrow view not only limits personal possibilities, it also limits the possibilities of democracy—in any size community. The ability to take on other perspectives can lead to empathy, countering the dehumanization of people perceived to be "not like us." I have come to understand that it is only when a prism's individual cuts of glass are viewed together, as parts of a whole, that rainbows shine through.

It fascinates me to reflect on the journey that has brought me to this place, knowing I have many miles yet to travel. A few years ago, Montana, the state in which I teach, passed an educational mandate called Indian Education for All (IEFA). Indian Education for All asks that all citizens come to know about the Native peoples of the land now known as Montana. It's as simple, and as complex, as that. When I first heard about IEFA, I had no idea that this directive, the first of its kind in the nation, would set me on a course of personal and professional growth that will continue the rest of my life.

Just at the time the legislature was considering funding IEFA, I had become active in the Montana Writing Project (MWP), which is part of a larger organization known as the National Writing Project (NWP). These organizations view literacy education as an act of social justice, so it followed that director Heather Bruce decided that Montana Writing Project should become involved in promoting IEFA across the state.

NWP holds summer institutes across the country, offering teachers professional development in the teaching of writing. Basic tenants include the understanding that teachers of writing must, themselves, write, and that teachers teaching other teachers is the most effective model for professional development. As IEFA came to the fore, MWP decided to extend its reach to include teachers in Native communities. Through this initiative, I had the opportunity and the honor of facilitating four years of MWP Summer Institutes in Browning, Montana, on the Blackfeet Nation. Following the national model for NWP Summer Institutes, teachers from on and off the reservation gathered in Browning each summer to write and share stories as teachers of writing. Native and non-Native, we also shared stories of our lives. For the first time, I heard stories of lives fundamentally different from my own. I was shocked at what I didn't know—about racism, poverty, federal policies past and present that impact everything about the ways of life of American Indian peoples. As I listened intently, I gradually came to understand that there are many ways of knowing...of living on this land. My perspective of the world is not the "right" one—it is one among many.

This experience was, for me, what Sandra Lopez referred to in the quote that opens this section. This was the spark that lit the fire. I began to seek out opportunities to learn about American Indian experiences, attending conferences and gatherings of Native peoples, listening to stories, reading widely. In many cases I had to unlearn the misinformation I had taken in, a legacy of decades of non-Native authors writing with seeming authority about issues and lives that were not their own.

Since that time, whole worlds have opened to me—worlds I had never known existed. In Lee Ann Bell's book *Storytelling for Social Justice, Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*, Bell describes "stock stories," the myths which make up the narrative of our country, and "concealed stories," which counter the stock stories. Often common knowledge among non-dominant groups, including people who live in poverty, concealed stories are often hidden from or repressed by people who appear to represent "mainstream America," people who have traditionally held power and created our national institutions. Author and historian James Loewen writes about stories "hidden in plain view." (Loewen, 2006.) These were the stories Martin Luther King, Jr. wanted to draw the nation's attention to when he worked to organize the Poor People's Campaign. Here I am, decades later, finally making that connection. The stories continue to be concealed.

One example Bell uses to illustrate a stock story is the notion of the "American Dream." In America, the story goes, all people have the opportunity to get ahead if they work hard enough. If people will only pull themselves up by their bootstraps, they can ensure that their children have better lives (37). She writes, "Stock stories affirm, albeit often unconsciously and obliquely, the superiority of the stock of whiteness. As the group defined as normal..., stock stories operate to confirm and benefit Whites as the "natural" and deserving beneficiaries of the racial status quo in the United States" (30).

One of the notions I latched onto was that of "white privilege." I began reading, trying to wrap my head around this concept I hadn't noticed before, but was verified by everything I saw around me on the Blackfeet Nation. There, reservation boundaries had been redrawn multiple times—whenever it was convenient for white "settlers," or for a government interested in creating a system of national parks. A friend who lives in Browning pointed out that reservation roads are commonly named for white ranchers who took advantage of the opening of reservation lands during the allotment period and staked their claims.

Clearly, there is economic benefit inherent in these policies. Someone's loss is always another's gain. As I read about white privilege, I shared my reactions to Peggy McIntosh's much-cited article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" with a colleague. As I spoke of recognizing myself in the article, that indeed, I was among the privileged and, I generalized, so was every white person I know, she gently cleared her throat. She agreed that she has been privileged as a white person, sharing several

examples of specific situations where she recognized that advantage. But she had grown up in poverty, as had many of the students she teaches. She said there were many items on McIntosh's list that would not have been true for her—or her for students. In that moment, I began to see that I have not only been privileged as a white person, but also as a member of the middle class. As I continue to read and learn, I can find even more ways I am advantaged in this country—having been raised in a family with a Christian background, for example, and by being heterosexual. In each of these areas, I fit the profile of what is considered “the norm.” Society's institutions are designed for people like me, and this is why Ruby Payne seems to suggest that my students living in poverty should learn to become more “like me” in order to “succeed.”

In my classroom this week, my students and I learned about and analyzed propaganda. Beginning with the anti-Semitic propaganda of Nazi Germany, we moved on to examine propaganda in the U.S.—past and present. At the end of a Power point presentation I had created, and after much discussion about the images we viewed, one of my students asked why we looked at so many images of people who weren't white in our discussions of propaganda and stereotypes. I wish I had thought to ask about all the images of white Jews, living their lives before and after WWII, but I didn't. Instead, I turned the question back to him. “Can you think of some examples?” I asked. He, and the rest of the class, sat in silence, and I let that silence just hang in the air. “If you think of any, let me know,” I said, letting the point make itself. Of course there are stereotypes of white people, and in thinking further, I realize they are mostly based on economic class or religion. So it is not enough to study and write about white privilege. It is far more accurate to recognize all of the rungs on the social hierarchy in our, to borrow the words of bell hooks, “imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (*Community* xiii).

A New Understanding: Back to the Mud

So what comes of this new understanding about all the ways in which I'm privileged? With awareness comes choices about how to use these unearned privileges...and how to bring them to the attention of others who are similarly positioned—and, perhaps, similarly blinded. A Blackfeet friend and colleague once asked me, in all sincerity, if white people were aware of their privilege. She expressed shock when I replied in the negative. As hidden as this hierarchy is from those privileged, it must be equally obvious from the positions of those who are not. So as one of the privileged, what, in the words of Russian philosopher Bakhtin, is my response-ability? (qtd. in Perl 84) What am I going to do?

I'm going to go back to getting my feet muddy. I'll write. I'll follow multicultural educator James Banks' lead and teach for transformation...and for social justice (qtd. in Elser 8). I'll encourage my students to work toward the kind of world they'd like to see seven generations from now, a practice of many traditional Native cultures (Bergstrom Cleary Peacock). I'll commit myself to anti-racist work, so I am one of the people walking backwards on the moving walkway described in Beverly Tatum's book *Why are the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, rather than simply being pushed along in its flow (11-12). I'll work at living lightly on the earth, because I am aware that my economic and material privilege always results from someone else's sacrifice. Long ago this system of privilege manifested itself on a national level...in fact, it has been labeled Manifest Destiny. The soil on which I walk once was cared for solely by groups of indigenous peoples. Now, the economic gain that has come from the raping of that earth, or so it must appear to its former caretakers, is almost solely in the hands of the rapists. Currently, that system of plunder and accompanying pollution is being spread across the globe, so that I can get material goods at Wal-Mart's “low, low prices.” Environmental costs are not yet factored into the economic equation.

Only when I come to see these truths do I have choices...about the country and world I want, for myself and for my students. Only when my students learn to read their world critically, will they have choices. I recently watched a TED talk by Bryan Stevenson. In it, he said he's come to believe that the opposite of

poverty is not wealth. It is justice. Finally, all these years after walking through the mud of Resurrection City, I am beginning to understand the meaning of those words.

Teaching for Social Justice

Threads of my initial exposure to social justice work have woven themselves into my teaching over the years, but it was with the funding of Indian Education for All (IEFA) in Montana that I strengthened my commitment to issues of equity, both in my teaching and in my personal development. Around the time IEFA was funded, I reconnected with an early teaching mentor, Bobby Ann Starnes, who years ago had directed Oxford School for Young Children, the place where I learned to be a teacher.

I had taken a few education classes at Miami of Ohio, my alma mater, but was thoroughly dissatisfied with the educational vision they put forth. Rather than continue with those courses, my advisor suggested I check out Oxford School for Young Children, an alternative school that embodied Bobby's ideas of what a school could be. There, rather than being "trained" how to be a teacher, I simply became one. I learned in a deep way, absorbing the philosophies while experiencing the reality of teaching without textbooks, worksheets or coloring books. In fact, I still avoid all of those things. At Oxford School, I taught my young students to read by doing my homework: each evening, I would write a couple of sentences about each child, individually. The next day, my eight students traced over my writing to learn the letters that made up each word, read the text with support when needed (they could always read their names!), read the text alone independently, then drew a picture which illustrated the text. Math too was individualized. Larger, mixed-age groups would participate in Social Studies or Science projects later in the day. Whole school activities, like building a float for the town's Homecoming Parade, would require planning and execution involving all students, age 4-12, the caveat being that each student had to have a role to play, requiring the group to find ways to work cooperatively and

include everyone. At assessment time, teachers wrote narrative reports for parents about the academic, social and emotional growth of each student. Oxford School has remained my vision of what school could be.

It was twenty years after I had left Oxford School to move to Montana that I found Bobby Starnes again. Much to my surprise, she was living in Montana. When I searched the web for her name, I was so intimidated, I almost didn't call her. Her new CV included an EdD from Harvard Graduate School. From there she went on to become the president of Foxfire: an organization focused on place-based learning in Appalachia that had built its teacher professional development program to reach across the nation.

Most recently, though, Bobby had been teaching on Rocky Boy's reservation, home to some of the Chippewa-Cree people living on the land now known as Montana. She taught third grade, and she later told me, after nearly thirty years in education, she came to realize how much she didn't know about teaching at Rocky Boy. She was in a new world, in some respects, and she knew that for her students to succeed, she had much to learn about the place from which they came, physically as well as culturally. Through this experience, which she describes in her *Phi Delta Kappan* article "We Can't Teach What We Don't Know, White Teacher, Indian Students," she was much more aware than I about the importance of Indian Education for All, Montana's newly funded educational mandate.

Having learned little about Native peoples in my own schooling, or worse yet, having learned stereotypes, I realized how steep the learning curve would be for me—and for other educators. Starnes recommended some books as starting points in my learning, including *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, by James Loewen and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Native American History*, by Walter Fleming, Kickapoo, then director of Native American Studies at the

University of Montana. These resources and our continuing conversations opened the door to what I knew would become a lifetime of new learning for me.

In 2006, Bobby invited me, along with Denise Juneau (Three Affiliated Tribes, Blackfeet) and Mandy Smoker Broaddus (Assiniboine) to co-edit a special section of *Phi Delta Kappan*. I also wrote an article, based on my own experience, about what I thought teachers would need to be able to know and do in order to meet the mandates of Indian Education for All. This article, published in a special section of *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine in November, 2006, reveals my thinking at that point in time.

One Teacher's Story: Creating a New Future...or Living Up to Our Own History?

by Wendy Zagray Warren, published in *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 2006.

Sometime during my fourteen years of teaching in Montana, I became vaguely aware of a Montana law called Indian Education for All (IEFA). I teach junior high language arts in a school far from a reservation and few of my students identify themselves as Native American. So, because of the many things waiting for my attention, I felt no pressing need to learn more about the law or how it might apply to my school or to me. If it did have something to do with me, I assured myself, someone would tell me. And if it had something to do with our students, it must already be a part of our social studies curriculum.

About a year ago, I started to become curious, though, when I heard Montana's legislators debating school funding for IEFA. So I did a little research and discovered that in 1999 Montana's legislature passed the Indian Education for All Act. Written to support Montana's 1972 Constitution, the law directs schools to teach all students about the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of Montana's American Indians. According to the law, all school personnel are also expected to "gain an understanding of and appreciation for the American Indian people."

"School personnel? That's me," I thought. With the nagging suspicion that IEFA might, in fact, have implications for me and my school, I read the law. It is impressive, deeply rooted in democracy and reflective of so much of what I believe about education's roles and responsibilities in our society. As I've learned more, I've come to feel proud that my state is taking the lead in what I hope will become a national movement in American education. Perhaps most importantly, I now realize that I have a clear responsibility to my students and to myself. And that means I have a lot of work to do.

Why Didn't I Know?

A year ago, I knew very little about American Indian history and what I knew about Montana's tribes could have been gleaned from a tourism brochure. That's because I—like most other Americans—am a product of an educational system that does not include Indians. For example, in my high school Ohio history class, I learned matter-of-factly how the Shawnee, Wyandot, and Erie tribes disappeared when Mad Anthony Wayne killed them off to clear the way for "settlers" moving west. Today, I would call

that ethnic cleansing. But the authors of my textbook didn't even hint that it might represent some injustice. Instead, it was celebrated as "manifest destiny." However, at least some Ohio Indians must have escaped Wayne's slaughter and the later removal to "Indian Territory" because I saw Indians once a year when my parents took me to an Ohio Indian festival. I must have been aware that Indians lived somewhere in the state, but I never wondered where or how they lived.

I don't know why it has taken me so long to notice my ignorance. Nearly thirty years ago, I lived and studied in Otorohanga, New Zealand. While in school there, I learned the history, language and culture of the Maori, New Zealand's indigenous people. I attended school and played basketball with Maori kids. They were a visible part of every community. You would think that I might have wondered where the indigenous people in *my* country were. I didn't see them in my high school. No class existed to teach me their language and culture. It's as if Indians weren't even there--weren't even a part of our society. And yet they *were* there and I could have seen them if I'd known to look. With the support of IEFA, perhaps today's students *will* notice.

American Indians live in all parts of Montana, where I now live, but I honestly can't say I have been any more aware of them or of their histories and cultures than I was years ago in Ohio. And there has been no expectation that, as a teacher or citizen of a state where Native Americans are so prominent, I *should* know. That has to change, not only because of the law, but because it will make our state stronger and a better place to live.

In the end, though, it was my students, as usual, who made the most convincing case for IEFA. Last year, I took my first small, tentative step to share with my students some information about Montana's Native peoples. In preparation for writing magazine articles of their own, my class studied several well-written articles. One was about a boy's experience in an Indian boarding school. A student in my class, a popular seventh grader, told me that his grandpa went to boarding school. It turns out his grandfather is Blackfeet. I hadn't even realized this student was American Indian, and he had never mentioned it until this moment: the moment he saw himself in the classroom for the first time.

I should have known this, too. I learned about the correlation between academic success and students being able to see themselves in schools a long time ago. That was the reason leaders of the women's movement demanded that textbook companies begin writing stories with girls as protagonists, including pictures of girls in textbooks, and acknowledging that women have played a role in this country's history. Soon after, people of non-European cultures also began to appear in classroom texts. Yet American Indians still haven't made a serious appearance, except as stereotypes in war bonnets and moccasins. Even a growing emphasis on multi-cultural education often forgets to include Native voices and perspectives. For example, turn to the author's page of any textbook and you will likely see people of many different colors and cultures, but rarely will you see an American Indian. Through this small effort, simply reading an article, I realized that some of my students may have been truly seeing themselves in school for the first time.

In this way, my own students led me to the most compelling reason to learn about Montana's Indians. Indian children are participants in my classroom; they live in my town, just as they are a part of classrooms and towns all over this country. You can't tell who is Native and who is not just by looking. They are a part of "us"—I have just been blind to their presence. I've finally learned enough to decide to take off the blinders.

Now the really difficult work begins.

I'm so appalled at my own ignorance that I have begun to learn—eagerly, almost defiantly. And what I'm learning is interesting, exciting and thought-provoking. When I think about it, it seems logical that when

Europeans came to this new land, there were things they could learn only from the people who already lived here. Those new ideas and ways of doing things have become a part of a collective American culture. But I never knew what they were. For example, when our Founding Fathers wanted to create a new form of government, different from the familiar models they knew in Europe, they looked to the Iroquois Confederacy. Yet I knew nothing about the Iroquois Great Law of Peace and had no idea that this document influenced the writing of the U.S. Constitution.

I'm also beginning to understand why social studies textbooks have avoided the topics of Native American history and contemporary life—or have watered them down so much as to be almost unrecognizable. It is easier not to know. The history of our government's relations with Indian peoples is not something that makes me feel proud to be American, and creating proud citizens seems to be a primary goal of these textbooks. There is a difference, however, between creating informed, proud citizens and fostering blind patriotism. My hope is that we are now ready to face even our toughest issues by teaching the truth about them and using our collective wisdom to work toward solutions.

Teaching a more accurate history, however, and introducing contemporary topics and cultures will be fraught with problems. There are many hard issues—issues that might make us uncomfortable—ugly and embarrassing episodes that in the past have largely been omitted. Yet we teach other difficult subjects as a matter of course. Most students, for example, learn about the Holocaust and African-American slavery. Yet, we do not teach that our nation's first slaves were Indians or that the Sand Creek Massacre falls within the legal definition of genocide.

And it will be just as difficult to teach about contemporary issues facing Native peoples. Historic treaties continue to go unrecognized. Money kept in "trust" for the tribes is still "unaccounted for," and it seems that some political lobbyists feel free to simply steal tribal money. Traditional sacred sites are constantly in danger of disappearing in the name of "progress." Some tribes are now minorities on their own reservations, as the devastating effects of failed government policies magnify in significance with each generation.

Toward Inclusion

At first, I'll admit, I did not immediately see the connections between IEFA and the language arts curriculum I'm responsible for. "I have enough to do as it is," I thought, "and really, isn't teaching about Native Americans part of social studies?" And then I reminded myself, *again*, that this law is not only about history. Schools often divide a vast sea of intertwined and overlapping knowledge into separate disciplines because each provides us a lens with a slightly different focus as we struggle to understand our world. There are Native American scientists, mathematicians, artists, musicians, sociologists, teachers, authors and poets. Acknowledged or not, the cultures of American Indian peoples are, and have always been, a part of the culture of our country. So I asked myself why these authors, poets, and storytellers haven't been included in my language arts curriculum. And for the first time, I began to think about ways to bring them in. Ideas started to come quickly, which made me realize this might not be as hard as I'd feared. I could read from the work of Native American authors as part of any genre study. We could discuss the traditions behind the stories my students and I often tell before we write. When I teach about stereotypes, I could include images of Indian Mascots among the examples. I realize now that no one is asking me to rewrite my entire curriculum. Instead, I'll need to slowly develop a new habit of mind so that the Essential Understandings become an automatic part of my planning. And, with the right materials, I'll be able to find ways to incorporate information about Montana's Indians into my lessons—to enrich our understandings of the world—and to finally welcome my Native American students into the classroom. Not only is that my responsibility, it is also my pleasure and my honor.

So this is how I came to understand the need for a law like Indian Education for All. Its very purpose is to break this cycle of ignorance that has me, and many other people, naively in its grasp. The framers of Montana's Constitution had enough foresight to know that educating the next generation of citizens is the only way to bring about lasting change.

But what if we live up to our own history?

My heart fills with hope when I see the potential for something like this law to bring so much good to the world. And then I start to worry. My biggest fear is that we will live up to our own history when it comes to American Indians. The source of this fear lurks silently in that dark, wide chasm between American "ideals" and the American way of life. It is from this chasm that blind patriotism is spawned. We loudly proclaim our ideals to the world—equality, justice for all—these truths that we hold to be self-evident. Yet we turn our heads to look away from all of the inequities inherent in our way of life. Once in a while, something prompts us to stop for a moment and look up, allowing us to take a wider view: the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, immigration demonstrations. To our own great detriment, we still stubbornly refuse to allow ourselves to face the inequities, injustices, and blatant prejudice in our dealings with American Indians. If we are successful, the Indian Education for All Act will force us to take the time to stop and look up, and do something about what we see.

Show Us It Matters

Like so many others teachers, I have learned that IEFA is, indeed, about us, our schools, and our students. And we want to do the right thing. But our already challenging jobs have recently been overwhelmed with the new requirements of No Child Left Behind and more and more standardized testing. And as is so often the case with school reform, teachers are the primary players in bringing change to the classroom. But no matter how committed we are to IEFA, or how easy anybody tries to make it for us, we can't do this work alone. So, from the governor's office, to my school principal's office, to each tribal office, we'll need to feel strong and steady support if we are to successfully take on these new challenges. This work will require some unusual kinds of collaborations: school leaders communicating with tribal representatives, tribal members working together as well as with people from other tribal nations, Native and non-Native people interacting with the deepest respect. Montana's Office of Public Instruction will have to coordinate these efforts so that we are all working together to implement change.

We will need to feel the commitment and support of our superintendents and principals and school board members. This support will be visible in what they say and what they do to keep this issue on the front lines of educational change. Perhaps the most telling decision they make will involve spending the money allocated by the state legislature to implement IEFA in all of Montana's schools. Since teachers are responsible for bringing this change to the classroom, it will be important to include us in making decisions about how this money can best meet our needs. And because this work cannot be accomplished in a year, or even a dozen years, the commitment by all stakeholders, financial and otherwise, will need to be long-term. Two needs are crucial for teachers to even begin the process of implementation: meaningful professional development for all school personnel, and classroom-ready teaching materials.

On-Going Professional Development

Providing funding does not magically change people's hearts and minds, but if wisely used, it can help us change what we know and what we do. Our learning curve will be steep and the kinds of information and skills we need will be varied. This information is new to most of us, and we won't feel confident in the classroom until we feel comfortable with our own level of knowledge.

Two separate kinds of professional development will be necessary. The first will help us learn the information that will gradually create new habits of mind, and the second will increase our ability to infuse our practice with a rich content about Montana's Native Peoples. One-time guest speakers or Indian Education Institutions may provide a starting point, but they are too brief and too infrequent to get the job done. As research clearly shows, meaningful professional development will have to be ongoing and accessible to everyone in the professional community in order to bring about lasting change. Obviously, this process will take time. And teachers are as diverse as any group of learners, so these learning experiences can't be standardized if they are going to be effective. Professional development will need to allow teachers various points of entry and enable them to progress at different speeds. There should also be a variety of ways to learn, from reading groups to seminars, all of them on-going, allowing for growth over time. As classroom teachers well know, one type of learning will never fit all.

Reliable, Classroom-Ready Materials

Once teachers feel confident enough to begin actually teaching about Montana's Indians, we will need reliable, classroom-ready materials. Nothing would cause greater panic than for Indian Education to be viewed as a curricular add-on—something else for teachers to fit into their already overloaded schedules. Instead, we need materials that can be used flexibly, to match different teaching styles and situations, and to be easily integrated into different subject areas.

The information used to develop these materials must come from the tribes themselves, and most tribes have already begun gathering the information needed to write their own histories. Then, it will take the work of educational experts with plenty of classroom experience to “translate” this information into materials that will be useful in the classroom.

Meeting the challenge of IEFA is not without its risks, and many teachers express concern about “doing something wrong.” Some feel they might unknowingly pass along the same misinformation that was taught to them. Others of us worry that as outsiders largely ignorant of our Native American neighbors, we may teach something in a way that trivializes the culture or might be seen as disrespectful. We will need to be patient with ourselves and with each other, because there is no doubt we will make mistakes. But the largest mistake of all would be to allow our fears to paralyze us into inaction.

Hopes, Fears, Dreams

Like most teachers, each summer I become filled with hope for the coming school year. I feel that hope now, as Montana attempts to blaze this new trail. This is an exciting time to be an educator in this state. Indian Education for All could have a huge impact on our students' educations and our state's future. The vision of the democratic ideal of a community that truly includes everyone sparks hope within me. Maybe by blazing this trail, rather than living up to our history, we will create a new future—one that instead, lives up to our Nation's ideals.

Full Circle: An End is Often a Beginning

Although I couldn't see it at the time, Indian Education for All was my re-entry into social justice work. As Bobby Starnes and I discussed the promise of Indian Education for All, we also talked about what teachers might need to be able to know and do in order to enact it. I

knew I would be starting almost from scratch regarding my knowledge of the history and contemporary issues of Native peoples, and I assumed many other teachers would be as well. Using myself as a test-case, I said to Bobby, “What I would need is small pieces of information at regular intervals—kind of like a journal. Do you know if there’s a journal for teachers focused on teaching about Native issues anywhere in the country?”

Bobby just looked at me for a while, then said, slowly, “That is a great idea.” She had already been working on a project involving large classroom teaching calendars focused on a different tribe each month, an idea conceived during her time at Rocky Boy School. Almost before we realized what was happening, we had imagined and drafted plans for a non-profit organization called Full Circle Curriculum and Materials. Because the materials would be based on what I needed as a classroom teacher just beginning to implement IEFA, we hoped they would be imminently practical, building background information for teachers and teaching ideas that could be taken straight into the classroom. The editor’s column I wrote for the first issue of Full Circle’s journal tells the story of Full Circle’s inception, and the piece that follows, an excerpt from a project proposal submitted to Montana’s Office of Public Instruction in November of 2005, outlines the organization’s scope and intent.

Editor’s Column, *Full Circle: A Journal for Teachers Implementing Indian Education for All*, Issue One, Winter 2006.
by Wendy Zagray Warren

As I write this column for the first full issue of *Full Circle*, I am filled with the mix of emotions that come with any new beginning...awe, pride, fear, hope. Sometimes those emotions spur us forward with elated optimism, other times they cause us to freeze in our tracks for a moment...to look back from where we came and to look forward to what might lie in the path ahead. Looking back is fun for Bobby and me, because we have a long history of working together. Rather, we have a long history with a big hole in the middle...kind of like a circle. Our story reads like a fable.

Long ago and far away, in the small town of Oxford, Ohio, Bobby Ann Starnes created a school...the kind of school she had always dreamed of for the students she taught. The kids who attended this school, and their parents, became an extended family, and this gathering of people

worked together in the messy and complicated ways that people do, to create a place of learning, caring, and growing.

In that same small town, Wendy Zagray was a college student who wanted to become a teacher, but she was about to give up on that dream because the picture of schooling painted by the education professors didn't look anything like the vision she carried. A friend introduced Wendy to Bobby, and at Bobby's school, Wendy began to learn what it means to be a teacher. And they taught happily together in that place for years.

As often happens, our lives eventually took separate paths and we lost touch for more than twenty years. Then suddenly we discovered we both lived in Montana. We couldn't wait to meet. So we drove from our homes in Havre and Kalispell to the East Glacier Lodge. There, sitting together on the huge stone porch, we looked out over the mountains of the Two Medicine and talked non-stop for five hours—giggling about grey hair while saying “Oh, you haven't changed a bit.” Our conversation picked up where we had left off twenty years ago, filling in the missing pieces of our life stories, and sharing our hopes and dreams as teachers.

As we talked, we found that we shared a deep commitment to Indian Education for All, not so much to the law itself as to the vision of a truly democratic world it creates. Bobby had already begun her work in the area of Indian Education. She had spent the last few years teaching on the Rocky Boy Reservation. There, she met educational challenges she had never faced in her twenty years in the classroom. She realized she had a lot to learn about the lives and cultures of the students she taught, and she had to find ways to bring their lives into the classroom. Her students were important teachers for her, but she needed the guidance of community leaders to help her create materials that would be culturally relevant for her students.

Fortunately, she met Jolene Crebs, a Cree woman who became a friend, a mentor and a cultural guide. Jolene, then working on the Cree language and cultural preservation project, and Bobby began working together to develop materials that Bobby could use in her classroom. The Full Circle Calendar was born of this collaboration. With the hopes and dreams that Bobby, Jolene and I share, it's not surprising that we joined forces to work toward our common values and purpose.

Life has a way of working in circles. In many ways, the Indian Education for All Act itself is about completing a circle, a circle that has so long been made incomplete by the near absence of Native American voices. We realize that although every Montanan has a role to play, the possibility of Indian Education for All lies largely in the hands of teachers. What we do in our classrooms will determine whether this dream of a truly democratic society will be realized. In so many ways it is up to us now.

Full Circle: Implementing Indian Education for All

Project Proposal submitted by: Bobby A. Starnes, EdD. and Wendy Z. Warren, B.Phil. eds.

The passage of the Indian Education Act was a watershed for our state, signaling our readiness to embrace the contributions of *all* Montanans. Because there truly is strength in diversity, we have all been weakened by the silencing of Native American voices. We can't even begin to imagine what we have missed, or what we will gain when the silence is lifted.

Unfortunately, many educators are insecure and uncertain about the best ways to begin implementing Indian Education for All. For these teachers and others, simply finding materials and information they can have confidence in may be the biggest challenge to successful implementation. As teachers, we know the importance of sharing stories, knowledge, and experiences with our colleagues.

We plan to produce and publish a journal, tentatively titled *Full Circle: Implementing Indian Education for All*, to meet this need. The journal will be designed to quickly disseminate quality information with practical classroom applications. Articles written by teachers will provide guidance for their peers and document the effects of this Act on classroom practice. *Full Circle* will serve a diverse readership of Montana K-16 teachers with varying levels of experience, knowledge and expertise. Each issue will include voices from both rural and urban settings in all areas of the state. By keeping the journal's content broad, teachers have room and encouragement to grow.

Three articles highlighting various ways individual Montana teachers are infusing Indian Education into their curriculum will be at the heart of each issue. One article will celebrate the first steps a teacher is taking to bring Indian Education into his/her classroom. Another article will feature the classroom of a teacher who has done some work with Indian Education in the past, and is trying some new strategies. A third article will examine a more advanced application of an Indian Education curriculum.

Full Circle will feature interviews with prominent Native American educators and contemporary American Indians, stories from tribal elders, a guest column, an editor's column, and essays, stories, and artwork by a diverse array of Montana students. Planned sections include "Through My Eyes," highlighting cultural similarities and differences between native and non-native peoples and among Montana tribes; "Getting it Right," short pieces in which tribal members relate little known or misunderstood historical facts about their tribe; "A Moment in Time," a page featuring an historic event; and a section on Contemporary Issues in American Life.

Regular columns will also include specific suggestions for classroom activities and resources for Indian Education. For example, "What Can I Do Tomorrow?" will provide a reproducible story or image for classroom use. In another feature, "Now Here's An Idea," teachers will share successful classroom practices that may easily be adapted to other settings. And the "Resources" section will include reviews of books and media, and list websites and guest speakers.

Everall Fox, who directed the Indian Education Division of Montana's Office of Public Instruction at the time we submitted our proposal, enthusiastically encouraged us to pursue this project, saying he was almost sure OPI would be able to help fund it. Unfortunately, Fox ended up leaving OPI shortly thereafter and the new director didn't share Fox's enthusiasm for providing funds for *Full Circle*. With hope still in our hearts, Bobby and I volunteered our time, and, working with meager resources, we set to work.

Knowing these were not our stories to tell, we established systems in order to work with committees of tribal members around the state in order to produce journals, classroom teaching calendars and newsletters for teachers. Because he believed so deeply in our work, my husband Bob took on the role of photographer and publications manager, saving us much in the way of

publication costs. After three years of exhaustive effort, we still didn't have enough subscribers to stay afloat, and were forced to finally admit that we could not continue. In the meantime, Bobby had been offered and accepted a position teaching at Berea College, which would mark a return to her homeland in Appalachia. By the time of our last issue, she had become Chair of Education Studies at Berea. As sad as we felt about ending our work, we knew it was a time to look forward rather than back. The editors column for the final issue of Full Circle, excerpted here, evokes our sorrow—but also our hope.

Editor's Column. Full Circle: A Journal for Teachers Implementing Indian Education for All, Spring 2008

by the Full Circle Team: Bobby Ann Starnes, Wendy Zagray Warren, Bob Warren

When a door closes...

The sadness in our hearts as we write what might be the final editor's column for Full Circle—unless some miraculous source of funding appears—at least matches the excited anticipation and hope we felt in writing the first one. We are so proud of Montana for funding Indian Education for All—it is so ethically and morally right. We thought it might take off like wildfire. And, in order for that to happen, we knew teachers would need resources that provided background knowledge as well as high quality materials to use in their classrooms—and I believe that's what we have produced. Some teachers tell us our materials helped them get started when it might have been easier not to do anything. Others say Full Circle materials have become the cornerstone for IEFA efforts in their district. And feedback like that has nurtured us through the times we have felt overwhelmed or discouraged during the past three years in which our lives have been devoted to this work. We have reached a few turning points where we had to decide whether to stop or to keep going. Each time we have chosen to continue—to work around whatever appeared to be the roadblock of that particular moment. Now we have reached an obstacle we are not seeing our way over.

The simple fact is that we are out of money. The funds Bobby's brother left her which provided our "start up" costs have long since been depleted. Our memberships have barely provided enough money to cover monthly printing and shipping costs—in fact, they didn't even quite get us through this school year. And the three of us have been so busy writing, editing and producing materials that we simply haven't had time to pursue other sources of funding. I guess we have been harboring some hope that the quality of the materials would magnetically attract some source of funding, governmental or private, or that more school districts would find enough value in Full Circle's materials that they would become a major component of their district's implementation of IEFA. Our dreams don't pay the bills, though, so although our commitment to the work of Indian Education for All will continue, we haven't yet found a way to continue the publication of Full Circle materials—at least for now. And as exhausted as we are after three years of concentrated effort, we mourn it like a death.

We have done our best, Bobby and Bob and I, and we are proud of the materials we have produced. We are humbled by the many people who agreed to visit with us, allowing us to photograph them, and trusting us to accurately share their stories with Montana's teachers. We thank the members of tribal calendar committees for so carefully selecting and gathering the information that would allow others to learn. We are grateful for our team of advisors and board members who carefully read draft after draft, offering advice and suggestions to improve the quality and ensure the accuracy of materials that would reach teachers. All these people have volunteered their time and expertise, and without them, Full Circle could not exist.

...somewhere a window opens.

And speaking of IEFA, we truly believe, perhaps as a way of easing the pain, that the work we have done with Full Circle will somehow lead us to something new. We have learned so much, and we'll be watching and waiting to see how it will apply to whatever waits over the next horizon. In the meantime, our efforts will turn to our "day jobs"—Bobby as chair of the education department at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky and author of a bi-monthly column in Phi Delta Kappan magazine, Wendy as a seventh grade language arts teacher and Indian Education for All Coordinator for Columbia Falls Schools and as a member of the Montana Writing Project's leadership team, and Bob as photographer, layout artist and builder of wooden boats.

The future...

We hope you will continue using Full Circle's materials—for your own learning and in your classroom. Nothing would be more gratifying for us. And if you find you would like back issues or extra copies, in most cases, they are available. If you have a rich uncle who is looking for a philanthropic cause, send him our way. In the meantime, we will continue to learn about issues confronting the first Americans, to work for equity, and to teach the students in our classrooms the truth about the history of our country and about the lives of contemporary Indian people. We hope you will, too. Because when we put our minds together, we truly do have the power to determine what lives we will make for our children.

Seeking the Window

During the time of Full Circle's operation, I was deeply involved in IEFA work in other ways as well. I had accepted a part-time position as IEFA Coordinator for Columbia Falls Schools, a position that allowed me to design and direct the way IEFA might unfold in our district. Also, over the course of four summers, working with colleagues who are Blackfeet tribal members, I directed a Montana Writing Project satellite summer institute in Browning, Montana, on the Blackfeet Nation. Each of these intensive, three-week summer institutes was a time of great learning. Following are a poem, articles and reflections that provide a glimpse at this cycle of growth.

Mission Boarding School 2007

Wendy Zagray Warren, published in *Full Circle*

The east-side-of-the-mountain winds
Howl today
Blowing prairie grasses,
Cottonwood leaves,
Spirits.

We walk toward the graveyard,
Donna, Kevin and I,
Across a fallow field,
Our feet sinking into the soft soil
With each step.

Kevin tells of his relatives
Who are buried here
Boarding school children
Killed by disease
Killed for being Pikuni.

His grandfather,
As a third grader,
Ran for his life
Escaping the brutal punishments
And humiliation
Of this place.

Here
We are forced
To stare these stories
In the eye

Our hearts
Struggling
To find words
In a place
Where words
Will never be enough.

My Guide, 2007

by Wendy Zagray Warren, published in *Full Circle*

The metal rowboat boat echoes as Bob steps into it, socks dripping. I follow, tentatively, knowing he will need help, not knowing if I should be the one to give it.

I move to the plank seat in the front of the boat and sit down, facing shore. Kathy and her twelve year old nephew Emerson come down the hill from the truck carrying life jackets to guard against the wind-whipped water.

Emerson runs over. “You guys going out?” he asks.

“Yea—you wanna' go?” Bob waves Emerson to the boat.

“Yea,” he says, handing us life jackets. Bob puts his on the floor of the boat. Emerson and I put them on. We sit side by side on the front seat as Bob begins to row us out, struggling into the wind. We carry precious cargo.

A group of us had prepared Woody's painted tipi, canvas weak with age, as an offering to the water people. The sacred design, transferred to Woody, couldn't be replicated until this offering had been made. We spread the lodge cover out on the grass as Woody explained the meaning of each painted section. Then we fell silent, the wind rustling the prairie grasses carrying the significance of this moment to our hearts.

Woody tied tobacco into the corners of the lodge, and he and Kathy smudged them and prayed. The group gathered rocks from the shoreline, wrapping and tying them into the tipi. It took all of us to lift the lodge onto the back seat of the boat.

The weight of the tipi rocks helps us to navigate the rough waters. We look to shore where Woody and the others gather. I feel the heart of the earth as Woody begins the drumbeat that guides and protects us as we slowly make our way toward the center of the lake. Woody begins to sing, and the song, carried unevenly by the winds, reaches us in waves.

Emerson whispers to me, “You know, I'm afraid of water. That's why I wanted to come.”

“Really?” I say, thinking he chose quite a day to try to overcome his fear. “Well good for you.”

He trails his hand in the water, watching its wake.

“Is it cold? I haven't felt it yet,” I ask, putting my own hand over the side.

“Yea,” he says, “You'd probably get hypothermia if you fell in.” He's right, I realize, measuring our growing distance from the shore. I nod toward the north shore. “That looks the closest, so if we have to swim, that's the one we should head for.” I grin, trying to make my words a joke. I glance at his life jacket to be sure it looks secure and then tighten my own.

“You know,” I say, “What we're doing is a good thing. I think when you're doing a good thing, you don't have to be afraid.”

He nods. He begins to relax as he focuses on each individual ray of sunlight filtering through the water's surface. The water is murky; the light doesn't reach very far. He comments on this, making me realize that the lodge will vanish quickly from view.

And it does, when the time comes. The drumbeat stops and Woody stands, smoking a ceremonial pipe. Bob and I move to the front of the boat. Emerson is at the oars, nervous because he has never rowed before. We lift the lodge, trying to spread it as it falls over the side. The rocks carry it downward faster than we anticipate, yet it unrolls and begins to spread itself as it disappears from view...

The wind pulls our minds back to the boat as it turns, pushing us toward a different shore. Emerson seems relieved when Bob moves back to the oarsman's seat. He moves to the front of the boat, and Bob

asks me to sit in the back, replacing some of the weight of the rocks. We make our way slowly back to shore, the boat battling the wind with each stroke of the oars.

Later that afternoon, I enter a sweat lodge for the first time. I am a bit claustrophobic, and I feel the fear of the unknown. My mind flashes to Emerson, confidently stepping into the boat, not despite his fear, but *because* of his fear. Rather than resisting, he allowed fear to become the force that drove him forward. And I realize that Emerson is my guide into this new experience. My own words echo, “If you’re doing a good thing, you don’t have to be afraid.”

As the ceremony begins, I am filled with peace. Rather than feeling claustrophobic, the lodge seems to open to the vastness of the universe. I learned there is nothing to fear, but much to explore in the depths of my own heart.

Emerson runs over to join us for the second round of the sweat. His voice rises with the others in songs of prayer and thanksgiving. My spirit lifts with the voices, thankful for this day—for this moment—for my guide.

Why Look at These Hard Topics? 2008

by Wendy Zagray Warren, unpublished

Last year during the Browning Summer Institute, Kathy Kipp’s personal story and the stories of others in our group started me on a journey that continues today, and will continue for a lifetime.

I can only speak from my perspective of one non-Native person. And I am amazed at the depth of my own ignorance. I had never heard these stories before, and it looks to me like they were deliberately kept from me. But when you hear a person tell a story from their family—about a kind of oppression my family has never been forced to experience, it changes everything.

The realization of how the past impacts the present shows me so clearly why it is important that non-Native people learn the true history of this country. Non-native people often look at the reservation—or even Indian people living off the reservation—with great judgment. I rarely hear words of compassion. Why? Because we don’t know and have deliberately not been taught that history.

When we think about survivors of the European Holocaust, we acknowledge the genocide that occurred. Words are important. But I see people looking at the ancestors of Holocaust survivors with great compassion. We expect there to be residual effects of those events—for many generations to come. We willingly acknowledge some burden of responsibility—a willingness to try to support people in whatever ways we can. Compassion.

And, as difficult as it is, until people learn the truth about the history of this land—of the oppression of one group over all others—and name it what it is—genocide—I’m not sure the compassion will come. It is asking a lot of people to ask them to tell these difficult stories over and over again. But these are the very stories that will help us—and our children—move forward.

My students—Native and non-Native—who come from homes where their families are in trouble—with alcohol, drugs, abuse, and the myriad of other things that people try when their reality is too hard to face—need to understand the reasons some of these things are happening. They live in a world that easily passes judgment on other people—labeling them weak or lazy or misguided. And they look at the people who are so labeled, and they look at their parents—and they look the same. We don’t do a good job of

educating children—or ourselves—about the many causes of these issues. It's much easier to just pass judgment. Judgment doesn't require action. It's so easy to let the "blame" lie with the individual.

Compassion, on the other hand, is a call to action. Compassion means human beings forgive and support and love one another. Compassion requires that we see each other. Compassion requires that we see each other as a collective—as equal spokes on a medicine wheel that is tilting out of balance. And it is up to us to find ways to bring it back into balance.

Sondra Perl, a woman I'll have the privilege of working with later this summer, writes of response-ability. What is our ability to respond to each other? Finding balance means sharing power, sharing wealth, sharing from our hearts. Are we up to the task—as a school—as a community—as a nation?

It's asking a lot—sacrifice—on the part of each one of us. Hope lies in believing in that sacrifice. It is not easy to do this work—for people to find unity in diversity. But if we can't ask that of ourselves—what else is there?

Bearing Witness 2009

by Wendy Zagray Warren, published in *Montana Writing Project Journal*

Because I am just learning to listen—really listen—I write as fast as I can as Joe speaks, not wanting to miss an important fact. My excuse is that I'll probably be sharing this story later, and I want to get things right. At the time, I really thought that was true. Looking back, if I'm being completely honest, I realize this must also be a way I try to detach—to take in the facts and not the emotions, engage my brain instead of my heart, as Joe tells the story of great tragedy and subsequent cover-up—the murder of over two hundred Blackfeet women, children, and male elders by the U.S. army.

We are close to the site, but not on it, which makes it easier for me to disengage. This land, which was for many in Heavy Runner's band, their last view of this world, is privately owned by a non-Native rancher. The owner had always permitted Blackfeet people to visit the site, not here where we are, but on the actual ground where the victims fell—to honor their ancestors who died here, especially on the January anniversary of this event. That has all changed, however, in the last year, as the landowner has decided he wants to sell these few acres of land, here in the middle of his ranch, for a couple of million dollars. So, the site is now gated. Apparently even this place of tragedy has a price. We drive up a short, bumpy access road to the gate, and sit in a small patch of grass nearby.

Joe's story is not well-known, even among many in the state of Montana, where we, a group of teachers associated with the Montana Writing Project, sit today. Because in addition to the generational trauma caused by forced assimilation, this story adds a new burden, borne, at the moment, primarily by the Blackfeet people—borne by families like Joe's.

History seems far away from today's world when you read it in a book. Yet history is simply the story of people's lives. Events of the past impact the present. This story is no different.

Joe begins to speak, although clearly it is painful. He is talking about members of his family, people who were murdered. I use that word thoughtfully, carefully, even though the U.S. army recently told a historian that is not a word they will use to describe this incident. But what else is it but murder when innocent people are shot? Heavy Runner, the leader this band, Joe's ancestor, was the first person gunned down, even as he held a piece of paper in his hand guaranteeing peace for his people. The paper had been signed after he reluctantly agreed that his band would follow the mandates of the government, spelling out where and how they could live, heavy with the knowledge that this was the only choice possible. All

he wanted was for his people be allowed to live out their lives in peace. And even that proved to be impossible.

Joe says he can't tell this story often; it becomes poison to him. He doesn't want to be bitter, full of anger. And as I hear the story's details, I begin to understand. Because it makes me angry, on so many levels. I am angry at the murder of innocents. I am angry that the government, *my* government, awarded the soldiers involved Congressional Medals of Honor. I am angry that not only has there has been no apology; there has been no acknowledgement of these murders, as if their deaths didn't matter. I am angry that I haven't been taught this truth.

Joe has learned to be resilient, to be able to put away his anger and sense of loss. We can all learn this from him. And, as painful as it is, he has come to believe that hope for the future comes from sharing these stories with teachers and with children. It is that hope for that brings us together today, in this place.

I am thinking about these things as Joe talks, and suddenly he stops and looks up. Together, we watch a truck slow and turn onto the narrow access road on which we sit. "Uh oh," I think. "Is this the landowner? Is he going to ask us to leave even our place on this side of the gate?" And again, I'm angered that people could be kept from this place, making it even easier for us to look away, pretend it never happened, so we don't have to talk about it, teach about it, humble ourselves as a nation.

Instead of being nervous, as I am, Joe says, "I hope it *is* the landowner. Then we can find out what he's really thinking, and ask if we can go down there. It would be good to talk with him."

The truck pulls up beside us. A young man climbs out, nods hello, and opens the gate. Joe asks if he owns this land. He grins and says no. He says he is going to take care of the sheep. Joe says, "Do you think it would be okay if we go down there?"

The man nods his head, smiles again and says, "I think so." When the truck passes through, we notice he leaves the gate open.

Joe finishes his story, I close my notebook, and we jump into the bed of Joe's pickup. I ride next to Moriah, Joe and Kathy's daughter, a young woman soon bound for college in San Francisco. I look around at the beautiful river break, the rippling prairies. "Soak it all in Moriah, so you can take it with you." She nods. She's way ahead of me. It's clear that's exactly what she's been doing for a very long time. She isn't really leaving; this will always be a part of her; this land and these stories.

A short way down the dirt road, we stop where we can walk down a bluff to a level piece of ground overlooking a sharp bend in the Bear River, renamed Marias by Lewis and Clark. Earlier in the week, we had heard an elder explain that Blackfeet don't write their people's history on paper. Instead, it is written it on the land that is a part of them, often with stones arranged to form circles or medicine wheels. We are about to witness one of those places.

We descend a steep path, noticing that the prickly pear is in bloom. Delicate pink flowers dot the dry hillside. And then I see the rocks. Two hundred and fifteen stones in a circle, one for each of the male elders, women and children who died in the Bear River Massacre. Each rock is distinct, unique. Despite my light words about finding hope in blooming flowers, I am overwhelmed at the sight of the rocks. Each becomes a person. Their spirits are here. I touch them, expecting to find a beating heart. No longer shielded by my notebook, no longer guided by my brain, my heart takes over. I am overwhelmed. I begin to sob. I move away from the group, into my silence. Joe smudges to purify himself, and enters the circle, tucking tobacco under some of the rocks in offering. He invites us to join him and we do, one at a time,

smudging and then circling in the same direction. I move slowly, touching rocks occasionally. They are warmed by the sun today; they live and breathe.

Silently, we move out of the circle, and spread out—each entering our own hearts to contemplate what happened here and to pray. No other response is possible.

On this land soaked in human blood, it is only possible to think with your heart. The air is still, the silence broken by occasional songs of Meadowlarks and the bleating of sheep. The story seems so cut and dried in the few history books that mention it at all, when your brain is processing the information. It is possible to remove yourself then, as I did by taking notes as I listened to Joe.

Sitting on this hillside beside the stones, my heart takes over as I try to imagine that frigid January day. The healthy men were gone, hunting in the Sweetgrass Hills. From where I sit, I can see those hills in the distance, rising over the sharp rim of the river break. I look again into the river valley. The lodges would have been arranged in a circle, each one facing east. The older men, women and children would be inside, near their lodge fires, many sick with smallpox.

The U.S. army troops would have appeared suddenly. Heavy Runner knew they were looking to avenge the death of Malcolm Clark, a Helena rancher. He knew it was not his band they were looking for. He came out of his lodge, grasping a piece of paper. He was in the right place, on Blackfeet land. The soldiers were the trespassers here. A fur-trader hired as a scout told Baker, the colonial in charge, that he could tell by the lodges that this was Heavy Runner's band. Baker decided one band was as good as another, and ordered his troops to open fire. Heavy Runner was the first to be murdered as he stood in front of his lodge. By the time the shooting was over, fifteen men and two hundred women and children had been killed. The few survivors, hiding where they could, were left to die. The soldiers killed the horses they didn't take, destroyed the food, burned the camp. I could almost smell the smoke, feel the ashes as they fell from the sky. Two hundred and fifteen stones.

As we sit in the warm summer sun, bearing witness to this place, a gunshot sounds. Our heads turn as we look to each other, our eyebrows raised in question. We smile, trying to cover our fear, shrug and return to our thoughts. The Sweetgrass Hills rise in the distance, over the rim of the carved river canyon. Again, my heart imagines how the hunters must have felt as they came over this rise, joyful at the thought of sharing meat with the camp, only to find the charred remains of their lodges and the bodies of people they loved. Joe's great grandfather, Takes Gun at Night, was eleven years old. He was there, witness to this crime. He survived by running for his life, up a coulee, and hiding in a tree. Joe carries the name of the U.S. Army scout who adopted that eleven year old boy, now suddenly orphaned in the space of less than an hour. It is almost beyond imagining.

A group of white ranch buildings is the only sign of human habitation this day, sitting about where the returning hunters might have appeared. Another shot—it seems far away, but loud. Where could it be coming from? I begin to feel more on edge. Should *we* be running up the hill—running for our lives? The peace I felt a few moments ago shatters. With a third shot, we decide it is time to leave. Enough shots have been fired here for a lifetime. We walk slowly up the steep hill, dirt slipping under our feet, rising above the circle of rocks, the bend in the river, the story we now carry with us.

The telling of this story is a gift, we realize, of love somehow sown from the ashes of hate. It comes through Joe, from his ancestors who died here, from the earth that absorbed their blood, from the rocks that now speak. They cry out for justice, demanding that their story be told. I have learned something here today. I have learned to listen to the land—to listen with my heart. This gift has been given in trust. I carry it with me now; it will be a part of me always, to share with my students, and all who will listen to those who can no longer speak for themselves.

Making Connections

In 2009, in the midst of my intense work with Indian Education for All, my friend and MWP colleague Brenda Johnston (Blackfeet) and I applied to attend a Holocaust Educators Network (HEN) seminar in New York City, sponsored by the National Writing Project and The Memorial Library of New York City. The seminar was directed by Dr. Sondra Perl, preeminent teacher of writing and author of *On Austrian Soil: Teaching Those I was Taught to Hate*, a book that had inspired my application. Sondra had travelled to Austria to teach Master's level classes to Austrian teachers, and wrote of her experiences there. I read of conversations in which many teachers said they avoided raising issues of ethics in their classrooms when teaching about WWII and the Nazi Holocaust, or avoided teaching the Holocaust all together. Suddenly, I found myself reading on two levels. As Sondra wrote about asking Austrian teachers to confront uncomfortable issues about teaching the history of their own country, in my mind I began to create a parallel story about teachers on U.S. soil. I thought about the ugly history of U.S. federal policy regarding Native peoples on the North American continent—almost none of which I had learned in school. Now that I was learning as fast as I could and trying to find ways to raise these difficult topics in the classroom, I knew that some of my fellow citizens, indeed, even a few colleagues, objected. U.S. History books often avoid topics that might raise critical questions about events in our country's past (Loewen 2006). Some believe that is just as it should be. Yet, without a trace of irony, I think most people in the U.S. would say that the Nazi Holocaust should certainly be taught in European schools. Part of my interest in attending the NYC seminar was to explore the possibility of further connections between these topics—and to face my responsibility as a citizen and as an educator.

I had been accepted to the 2008 seminar, but circumstances prevented me from being able to attend that year. I was thrilled that, in the meantime, Brenda had also decided to apply for

the following summer's seminar. In our applications, Brenda and I wrote that we would focus on the possibility of similarities between themes emerging from studies of the Nazi Holocaust and Indian Education for All.

In July of 2009, Brenda and I flew to New York City to attend the HEN seminar. It was a profound experience to hear first-hand stories of survival and resilience. We heard survivor testimony from concentration camp survivors as well as from young survivors of the Rwandan genocide. During and after this seminar, for a time, all I could write was poetry. Somehow, other forms escaped me. For me, poems can sometimes reach into places where there are no words. The first of the following pieces is a found poem compiled from the sights and sounds of the 2009 HEN Seminar. The pieces that follow show my growing efforts to find points of connections between Holocaust Education and Indian Education for All, and to face my ability to respond as a human being.

Resilience 2009

by Wendy Zagray Warren, unpublished

What cannot be talked about
Can also not be put to rest;
And if it is not,
The wounds continue to fester
From generation
To generation. (B. Bettelheim)

How can we learn of resilience
If we don't first
Recognize pain?
Stare it straight in the eye
Unblinking
Resisting the driving need
to look away.

A single tear
Escapes
As stories of survivors
Intertwine with our own.
We now tenderly cradle
This piece of their hearts

Each story adds one small fraction
Of their burden to
Our bags
Redistributing a weight
Too long bourn by a few.

We hear stories of the impossible,
Stories beyond understanding,
Stories of genocide.
“I wanted to attach myself to a star
And fly away,” Gisela Glaser, survivor of Nazi death camps, says,
Details of that time in her life
Too difficult for us to imagine.
Clearly, as she talks, she relives the pain,
The loss,
“All those feelings I carry with me forever.”
And still she continues to speak.
Our eyes widen with the realization
That the gift we are receiving is love
Unconditional, undeserved,
Somehow seeded
In the soil of ashes.

Irving, also a survivor of Nazi camps,
Offers absolution,
Of a sort,
Our personal guilt
Or innocence
Determined
Not by our ancestors
But through our own actions.
“If you’re working with me
To promote understanding,” he says,
“Then you’re on my side.”

“I’m a human being.
“I must live and love,” Irving continues.
If I hate,
They were successful.
If I hate,
They have won.
We must find a way
To reconcile
With one another.
That is the only solution.”

“My parents survived because
One person cared
And decided to act.
Let us make a model
Of that person

For me, for you
And for our students.”

By choosing love,
Might we also choose life?

“Survivors have crossed the border
To the unthinkable,” Sondra says,
And then poses a question:
“What allows them to come back?
And how do we receive them?”

I am taken aback by this testimony,
By these questions.
How can any survivor
So generously
Give the world—give us--
Another chance?
Continue to believe in humanity
Despite these atrocities?
“You might not believe in miracles,”
Irving says, “I just depend on them.”

“And what would you have us teach the children?” we ask.
“Teach them life is limitless,” answers a Tutsi survivor
Visiting from Rwanda on a brief student exchange.
It is, indeed, a miracle he sits before us,
Trusting us with his stories
One day before running to safety, to Canada,
Navigating his way around a past
Too painful
To ever consider returning.

My response-ability has grown,
During this eleven days of
Clenching and opening
My one small hand.
I have hope
That collectively,
We might send up a prayer.

“You and I will start at the beginning,” we sing together
In the temple,
Non-Jews, welcomed with open hearts.
“It will be difficult.
But that doesn’t matter.
It’s not so bad.
You and I will change the world,
You and I, then all will follow.
Others have said before,
But that doesn’t matter.

You and I will change the world.” (Peace Will Come to Us—Sheva)

Response-ability, unpublished, 2009
by Wendy Zagray Warren

*The Ghost Dance dresses in this exhibition
Are a direct connection to
And a reminder of
Those events in history
That should not be hidden,
However difficult
Or saddening
They may be.* (Exhibit, Museum of the American Indian, NYC)

Like a two year old
Covering her eyes,
Thinking herself invisible,
I sometimes convince myself
What I can't see
Really isn't there,
As if reality is a construct
Of my own making,
As if looking away
Equals
Absolution.

I teach children;
I drive a car,
Yet I've never learned CPR.
Turned down every opportunity.
Images of accident scenes,
Screaming victims
Too much for me to bear.
“If I don't learn, I can't be held accountable,”
I think, somewhere in the corners of my mind,
“Someone else will handle it.”
As if when someone dies
While I stand by, looking away
Helpless,
I will feel no shame
For my purposeful resistance.

I eat meat
And, while I haven't been
Able to bring myself
To shoot an animal,
I know someone else
Does.
Grocery store packaging

Makes it easy for me to pretend.
In this, I have been a bystander
Choosing to look away.

One year, I decided to
Look a deer
Straight in the eye
As it hung in my garage.
The next year,
In my attempt to face reality,
Honor what's true,
I helped haul a deer
Out of the woods,
Bumping its body along
Over the frozen ground,
Its newly lifeless eyes
Open,
Recognizing the benefit I receive
From another's pain.

I live on this soil
Now known
As North America
And, while I haven't
Pulled any triggers
I know
Someone else has.
Classroom textbooks
Make it easy for me to believe in
Manifest Destiny--
Pretend might makes right.
In this, I have been a bystander,
Choosing to look away.

One year,
With the support of others,
I struggled to pull open my eyes,
Look at the small fragments of lands
Now reserved for Native peoples,
Heard stories of
What had come before,
Broken promises,
Unspeakable violence the very reason I now
Walk on this land,
Recognizing the benefit I still receive
From others' pain.

These truths must be told
Not to provide answers,
But to raise questions.
The blinders I have worn

Impact my actions,
And now I am responsible
To share these truths
With the children who will determine
The future of us all.

Final Reflections, 2009

Wendy Zagray Warren, for 2009 HEN Anthology

Two Countries: A Journey
With thanks to Naomi Sahib Nye and Sondra Perl

Walking on the land where Nazis walked
Began a journey for Sondra
Questions latent in her soul
Metamorphosed,
Forced to the surface
With each step.

We have now been graciously invited
To join her on this journey
On the soil of
This place now called America
To listen for the stories it tells
Stories of salvation for some
Something much more difficult for others.

What of the land—Austria, America?
Can the place we write possibly influence
The words we find in our hearts—
The words we utter?
If we attend,
If we are conscious
When each foot falls
I am told the soil transmits messages
Of people who came before.
I am beginning to believe.

Not long ago, I walked a piece of ground
Where unspeakable terror occurred.
A massacre, of Blackfeet women, children, and male elders
On the banks of the Marias River, in January.
The place is difficult to find—
Purposefully hidden from view,
But we walked with a survivor
A man whose great-grandfather
Had been the first one killed,
Shot while grasping government papers
Promising permanent peace for his people.
A circle of two hundred and fifteen stones

Marks this place
Each distinct, unique
Warmed by the sun, this June day
They live and breathe
While I weep
Here in the land of the free.

And when the place
We walk is the creation of man?
People forced into camps
Where so little of the natural world remained
There were no trees, no birds,
Where even spring was silent
And many never saw another butterfly.
Instead, smoke and ash
Rained pieces of flesh
On their faces, their hair.
I heard the stories of survivors,
Looked into their eyes
And wept.

And now, although I try to listen,
The soil under New York City streets
Has not yet spoken,
Or more likely I have not yet learned
To hear.

The voices of people
From many lands,
My grandmother from Hoboken,
And her parents before
Traveled from one old world to another
Where they had also not yet learned to hear
The stories of this land.
Instead, they carried their own rich histories
Hid them in the stone and brick
Of buildings that still stand,
Each with a story to tell.

Pieces of those stories have been told in this room,
The cut crystals of the chandeliers
Reflecting the many facets of our lives;
Some we have shared;
Some we have not.
I honor each of you
And thank you for
Your honesty,
The gifts of your stories
The gifts of yourselves.
I feel so lucky
That my journey has led me here

To this place,
Where together
We have learned to imagine something
Much larger than ourselves.
Meanwhile, in my Classroom...

With all of these rich opportunities for growth, I wanted to bring my personal learning journey into my classroom. To that end, I began revising and fine-tuning a year-long teaching theme I had been trying out in bits and pieces. I call it “Finding Our Humanity,” because its intent is to braid together themes emerging from the Holocaust, Indian Education for All, and the Civil Rights Movement and then to use those themes as a lens for students to be able to reflect about the ways in which they interact with each other on a daily basis. The following article outlines the origins of this classroom journey.

Remembering Our Humanity, published in *Montana Writing Project Journal* (rejected by *Rethinking Schools* and *English Journal*)
by Wendy Zagray Warren

Remembering What We Know

Sometimes as I create the path that becomes my life, I am reminded of something I know. Often I didn’t even know I knew it, but when the reminder comes, it rings so true it must have been there all along—part of my life experience or of my very being. One of these thoughts has recently occurred to me: There is nothing standard about being human. Education is a person to person endeavor, or as I like to think of it, a heart to heart form of communication. It is complicated, involving relationships between teachers and students and emotions very much like love. It is impossible to standardize this activity. Simply impossible.

One event that dislodged this idea came when Juno Diaz spoke to more English teachers than I’ve ever seen gathered in one room. Diaz, a Pulitzer Prize winning author, was keynote speaker at the NCTE Convention in Philadelphia. I was ignorant of Diaz’ work, but my conference roommate wouldn’t miss the talk, and invited me along. She lives in the Virgin Islands. Diaz writes often of his homeland in the Dominican Republic. He is her favorite author. I decided to travel light and leave my writer’s notebook in the hotel room. As a result, I now have a program for the General Session agenda with margins so full I have to turn it in circles to read the words I scribbled with a borrowed pen, for fear of losing them.

I’ve carried an image with me since that November afternoon. Diaz spoke of monsters that live in books and movies. When they pass a mirror, they can’t see their own reflection. As Diaz continued, I imagined him as a child, coming to school in America during his grade school years. *If we want to create monsters*, he said, *we simply create conditions where kids can’t see themselves reflected in the larger culture* (Diaz). My mind forms a picture of a hall of empty mirrors, and the rage carried by some of my seventh grade students.

Now, as I turn that wrinkled program in my hands, my eyes scanning the words scrawled there, another phrase leaps at me: *We [teachers] teach this civilization into existence. No other profession is embedded in the past, present and future simultaneously* (Diaz). The implications of this are so huge they scare me, because I know it to be true. Teaching is so dynamic, so interactive, so human—and the work we do changes the world. It has, it can, and it will.

Rereading Diaz' words, my mind wanders to my students in Columbia Falls, my commitment to Indian Education for All, my most recent attempts to meld social justice into my literacy curriculum, and my recent conversations with elementary teachers who feel increasing pressure to teach reading from a basal series. I think back to my early encounters with Dick and Jane—who got their basal rug yanked out from under them by the Civil Rights movement. After all, who can see themselves in that world?

Diaz spoke of reading as an act that asks us to practice deep compassion. It works the rare magic of putting us into the hearts and minds of other people. Reading touches our humanity (Diaz). And, as I remember reading the condensed-for-basal stories aloud in the Bluebird reading group, I can't remember experiencing any kind of human connection. We picked those stories to pieces, milking them dry, wringing every possible skill set from them. Diaz refuses to call this reading. To him, reading is something wholly other—reading is art (Diaz).

In teaching these disconnected skills in a class we name "Reading," we might expect exactly the reaction we get: kids learn to hate reading. But it's not really reading they hate; it's this disconnected way we teach skills apart from any meaningful or relevant content, so it becomes rote memorization—the lowest level of Bloom's taxonomy. Students might not ever get to the reading. Or when they do, it is an excerpted story, selected by someone in a distant place, for every third grader in the land. This passage may not be connected in any way to life as this student knows it or to anything that feels even slightly important.

Research tells us that humans learn best when that learning touches our emotions—our humanity (Caine and Caine 105). Reading is an act of compassion. (Diaz) As teachers, we know this, and yet most often we forget it, or try to ignore it, because today we are supposed to be teaching the skills on page 53, and someone will arrive in our classrooms to make sure that we are. *We teach this civilization into existence.* (Diaz) Surely, this is an important enough calling to require us to stand up and shout "Enough!" We know what to do. We are in these classrooms with these students every day. We know when something works and when it doesn't. We see it in the beautiful faces of our students. Why should we teach our children to fill in little bubbles on test forms as if each bubble is a window through which someone outside our classrooms can see what happens within? It just doesn't work that way among humans. If someone wants to see what happens in our classrooms, they simply have to come in, live our days with us, and watch the steady forward progress as children learn skills, as they learn content, and as they practice being human.

With the federal pressure to standardize education, I have considered leaving the profession. A standardized curriculum has not yet reached my classroom, however. I'm one of the lucky ones. And there are things that give me hope. To me, Montana's Indian Education for All law (MC 20-1-501) is an acknowledgement of Diaz's words: *teachers teach civilization into existence.* (Diaz) This law, passed in 1999, is about democracy and humanity. It asks us to ensure that everyone is reflected in the mirrors of the civilization we continue to create, and for each of us to consider our actions toward our fellow humans. But it panics people. How can we possibly add more to our overstuffed, skills-oriented curricula? Like every state in the country, Montana has created broad standards and benchmarks for each grade level and subject area. Working within school districts, teachers and curriculum directors break these documents down further, so that each benchmark is defined by a list of the skills required to reach it.

Further, a method of assessment must accompany each skill, an attempt to measure “mastery.” It is a tricky proposition to find ways to add issues of humanity to such documents. Humanity is not easily assessable.

Dr. Tammy Elser took on this challenge when she agreed to write a document commissioned by the Indian Education Office of Montana’s OPI called *The Framework: A Practical Guide for Montana Teachers and Administrators Implementing Indian Education for All*. Reading a draft of this document nudged another truth from the shadows. When people learn skills outside of meaningful content—without an immediate, relevant application for those skills, we get the reaction we so often see in our schools—unmotivated, disconnected students. Clearly, educators must find a way to help students learn the academic skills necessary for life in a twenty-first century world, while simultaneously considering the humane interactions required to maintain a democracy.

Dr. Elser suggests using Indian Education for All as an impetus to improve our pedagogy and therefore our schools. In *The Framework*, Dr. Elser suggests that as we examine our curricula, we consider skills and content separately. She creates a metaphor to help us visualize a relationship between the two: picture a body of water—a lake or an ocean. Various objects bob around on the surface of this water, with no apparent connection between them. These bobbing objects represent the skills we are asked to teach—the kinds of skills that are often measured by standardized tests. When we look far beneath the surface of the water, that’s where we find the “big ideas”—the content that can give these skills meaning. Unless teachers find a way to connect these surface skills to the big ideas far beneath the waves, the skills will soon be forgotten. Dr. Elser suggests that literacy is one of the strong undercurrents operating between these two levels (9-12). Through reading and writing, we connect our own stories with the stories of others—creating opportunities to practice the compassion Juno Diaz spoke of. Literacy creates the very connections that link skills to big ideas in what Elser calls “depth of study units.” (10) When these connections are made and the learning is then applied to real world problems, students see a purpose for their learning. Dr. Elser suggests that the IEFA Essential Understandings are in themselves big ideas, linked to vast, rich content, and that when we use literacy as a line to hook skills to such big ideas, we link learning to humanity (11).

So even though students are required to take standardized tests, and those tests are based on the learning of a given set of skills, perhaps there are ways to consider content on a more local level. For example, literacy classes are skill based. The skills can conceivably be linked to any content. When using a basal reader or a standardized program, the *company* selects the content that contextualizes the skills, and that content is standardized for use by schools across the country. The content is often also recycled for use over many years—in some cases generations. Dr. Elser suggests that rather than just accepting content selected by a group of people sitting in an office somewhere far away, that the content might be localized, thoughtfully selected by teachers in a given district, making the learning relevant to the lives of students in that time and in that place (12). In Montana, the *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians* (Montana OPI), will become a part of that content because what they are essential *for* is to help us understand contemporary issues in every locality in Montana and around the country. They will help us make learning relevant. That content becomes the way we teach civilization into existence as we take students into the depths of what multicultural educator James Banks calls the Transformative level and level of Social Justice (Elser, 47). At these levels, Indian Education for All asks us to think critically, to take on other points of view, to practice compassion, and to seek out ways to change the world.

So this is not an either/or proposition. We don’t have to choose whether to teach skills *or* emphasize content relevant to the continuation of our democracy. In “The Framework,” Dr. Elser gives specific suggestions about how teachers might begin the process of finding relevant content for their students, and matching it to the skills required by state standards and benchmarks (35-47).

Before I was reminded of any of this, I had already begun to test the notion in my own classroom. My ideas for the content of my unit have been forming for years, but I didn't realize it until Brenda Johnston and I attended a Holocaust Educator Network's Summer Seminar, sponsored by New York City's Memorial Library and the National Writing Project (NWP). At this seminar, Brenda and I rolled these ideas around for twelve days. My experiences in Montana Writing Project Summer Institutes in Browning, Montana, on the Blackfeet Nation, and my work with NWP's Project Outreach have also helped lead me to this place. The following is a brief explanation of what is growing into a year-long unit in my classroom this year. Keep in mind, as you read, that this is a work in progress.

From Theory to Practice: Finding Our Humanity

I teach seventh grade Communication Arts in Columbia Falls, Montana. The Language Arts classes in our Jr. High are tracked. The students who are permitted to take Spanish (the students considered to have the "highest ability") are in classes together, and the students in Title 1 Reading and in Special Education Reading classes are grouped in classes together. Students take Literature in a course separate from the broader Communication Arts class that I teach, and most of the Title 1 Reading and Special Education students are integrated into my classes. I never even meet most of the students who take Spanish.

As often happens, my idea for this unit grew from a feeling of desperation. The particular group of students I teach this year seems to have more than its share of "wounded" children. My last class of the day is the most difficult combination of students I've had in years. The racism of some of the students was evident early on, especially around the time of Obama's speech to schoolchildren. The way my students treated each other and their tendency toward violent solutions to problems clearly indicated that whatever content I chose to embed with the communication skills had to address these issues in some meaningful way.

What began in my mind as a unit or a series of lessons is evolving into a year-long seventh grade curriculum. The parts of this unit are not easy to untangle. They all speak to the same "big ideas" (Elser, 6): our similarities and differences as human beings; the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination that sometimes arise because of perceived differences; the choices people make every day about how they treat each other; how people are or can become resilient when faced with what seem to be overwhelming obstacles.

I began the year as I often do, with the students at the center. Each of us created and shared identity posters through which we explored similarities and differences in our lives; we wrote "Where I'm From" poems as extensions of these posters (Christensen, 18-22), and then I tried something new. We began talking about stereotypes, identifying examples, and then we applied the notion of stereotypes to ourselves. The students and I brainstormed ways in which people might stereotype us—and we wrote stereotype poems. I wrote a couple of different poems as examples, using various repeating lines and forms for the poems themselves as examples that students might choose to follow. The resulting poems demonstrated that most of them gained a personal understanding of what it means to be stereotyped—and also to stereotype others. These poems attracted a big audience, as they hung in the main hallway of our school through Parent/Teacher Conference days.

Since then we have moved on to conversations around the issues of prejudice, discrimination, racism and social justice. I have used Units from the Anti-Defamation League's *Echoes and Reflections* to introduce the Nazi Holocaust as one example of the results of hate. So far, I have focused on the events leading up to the "Final Solution," so that we can identify steps on the Pyramid of Hate (ADL, 98)—a visual depiction of how one thing can lead to another. I knew, however, that I had to find ways to link the past with the present in order for them to see the relevance of these topics. So the unit I am creating attempts to interweave a study of the Nazi Holocaust with issues of social injustice and genocide in this country—

of Native Americans, slaves, and the Japanese during WW II, to name a few examples. At each stage of our study, I want to be sure we look at the past, the present and into the future—so the students can't relegate these only as issues that happened "a long time ago—over there," with no application to their own lives.

At the same time, I need to find ways to keep my students practicing their writing and speaking skills—a challenge, to be sure. We practice "writing to think" as a way of guiding discussion almost daily. They are practicing "showing more than telling" by creating scenes of their own choosing—some students relate these scenes to the course content, some use them as a time to take a breath and write something wholly other. Their writing does not show an adult understanding—of course, these are seventh graders. But their writing and their speaking shows them grappling with issues that seventh graders are rarely asked to address, yet clearly loom large in their lives. We've been taking things one step at a time this year as we work our way through, following the general outline I've created while staying flexible enough to take advantage of teachable moments as they arise.

We are at the beginning stages of redefining the Language Arts curriculum in my district, so now is a perfect time for us to consider not just the specific writing and speaking skills we want to teach our students, but the content those skills are to be embedded in. In *The Framework*, Tammy Elser suggests we incorporate Indian Education for All by creating inquiry-based, interdisciplinary courses which incorporate higher levels of thinking (38-47). At this point, our Language Arts team is considering fiction writing as a major focus of the seventh grade year. With this in mind, a culminating project of the "Finding Our Humanity" theme will be for students to write a work of fiction, with their choice of sub-genre and age level of their target audience. I will ask students to create a character that breaks a stereotype of some kind, and to try to work the roles of perpetrator, target, bystander and ally into their plot. Linda Christensen, in her book *Teaching with Joy and Justice*, provides some wonderful student examples of these roles as they play out in memoirs (85-103).

Three other resources I've recently discovered will act as guides for me as we work our way through the writing of fiction: *Writing at Play*, by Mary Adler, *Stirring Up Justice*, by Jessica Singer Early and *Writing Circles*, by Jim Vopat. As my students work through complicating factors in their plot, my hope is that their fiction might give them ways to practice roles they might choose or reject in their own lives. The choices and the consequences might be played out on paper—perhaps preventing missteps in their own lives. Their final products might also be used as teaching tools as they share them with each other and also with younger students.

My students' reactions to the course so far encourage me to keep going. Their writing and their ability to express ideas is improving. They are engaging in critical thinking at a level unusual for seventh graders. They are coming to class armed with examples of stereotypes and prejudice they have witnessed—in the hallways, in classrooms, in the media and in their homes. They are beginning to see that they can make different choices—that they can help determine the environment of the school. They have listed groups of people sometimes dehumanized in our school (a list which horrifies me), and they have come up with some amazing ideas about how they might begin the work to make the school a place safe enough for every person to be who they are. They realize now that the derogatory names they call each other have a history, rooted in racism and religious intolerance. One early student suggestion is that they petition the school board to create a Jr. High class for all students to study these issues. Recently, another student, on his own initiative, took another idea generated in class to the student council. He suggested that Student Council consider putting together an all-school assembly in which issues of name-calling, stereotyping and prejudice are addressed. These are moments when my students show themselves and me that they are capable of moving into those levels of transformation and social justice that Banks suggests we strive for. These are the moments that keep me teaching.

Mitakuye Oyasin: We Are All Related

Perhaps the window I had been seeking since Full Circle folded was not a window at all, but a realization. All aspects of my work were beginning to merge in a way that felt just right. Even the lines between what was personal and what was professional had begun to blur. Themes braided themselves together until they became one—each reinforcing the other, making each stronger. This, I believe, is what Parker Palmer must be referring to in *Courage to Teach* when he writes about living “an undivided life” (Palmer 1998 p.167).

Sweetgrass 2008 revised 2012, unpublished

Each blade
grows strong,
separated
through the summer,
supported by gifts
from the Earth, the Sun and the Sky.

As the air dries,
the sweet, warm smell
of these grasses standing together
on the sun baked earth
beckons to those who pass by.

Offer tobacco,
wait patiently,
hope a strand will offer itself.
Pick one,
Then a bundle.
Hold it close to your face
And breathe.

Spread out the harvest,
examine each fiber
rough side and smooth,
green, perfect expanses,
and tiny insect holes.

Matching weak fibers with strong.
assemble three groups,
each unique, yet evenly matched.
Together, the strands look greener,
smell sweeter,

flaws hidden
in the unity of the bundle.

Weave these three strands,
Intertwining them
To form a braid.
Now the strands not only stand together,
But each depends upon the other,
Forever joined
In a bond that is difficult to break.

In the spring of 2010, I was invited to teach a few classes and give a presentation for the students and faculty of Education Studies at Berea College. I had known of Berea College since I was a child; my family had planned Berea as a stop on one of our family vacations when I was twelve years old. I was fascinated with the Appalachian Arts I saw students engaged in. I watched weavers, potters and blacksmiths until my parents had to drag me away. I was immediately drawn to the place. But Berea wasn't created for me—a person of relative economic privilege. Berea's mission is to teach primarily students from Appalachia who otherwise wouldn't be able to go to college. All Berea students work as well as study. The work they do, along with the college endowment, pays their tuition. This is one of the many ways in which Berea College lives out its strong commitment to economic and social justice. The college also recruits students outside of Appalachia in order to maintain the social diversity of their student body. *Before* the Civil War, Berea hired professors who were women, others who were African American. This occurred in Kentucky, a state which later forced the segregation of college campuses, including Berea, until it finally repealed the Day Law in the 1950's.

On Berea's beautiful campus once again, I found myself at home. Here was a college whose vision matched mine. For the first time ever, I began to consider the possibility of teaching at a college level; for the first time in a long time, I considered a return to my Midwestern homeland. Knowing that even to apply for a position at Berea I would need to have

a Masters' Degree, and that later a tenure track position would require a doctorate, I had a lot to contemplate. How strong was Berea's pull? How committed to social justice work was I? I decided to take one step at a time. I applied to a Masters' Program, the University of Montana's Creative Pulse, and was accepted. Step one. As I took each step forward, I looked around attentively, watching for signs that things might come together. My first piece of writing for the 2010 Browning Summer Institute reflects this thinking.

Called Home 2010 Browning MWP Summer Institute, unpublished
by Wendy Zagray Warren

"The writing journey begins in the landscape we were given; the place we were born is our point of departure." *Writing Toward Home* (Heard 83)

I think I'm being called home. Messages keep appearing. I am trying hard to listen, to find the next steps on this journey called life. I was born in the Midwest, but never really felt I fit in the paved landscape where I was raised. I felt most at home, in my childhood, on a hundred acre farm on the border of Pennsylvania and West Virginia—on the edge of Appalachia. Yesterday, when Jim asked us to name a place that we feel connected to; I went to this land, owned by my dad's lifelong friend. I didn't spend much time there, but it was there I came to know that my feet need to touch soil, not pavement. I want to come to know a piece of earth in its entirety, the things that share its space, the water that runs through it.

I've lived in Montana a long time. I love this land, and I love what I do here. But I'm far from this place that once was home, and I'm far from my family. Perhaps it's common to travel in the middle of your life, to find out what other gifts the earth holds, but I think it's also common to feel a pull to return to the place that was, as Georgia Heard says, your point of departure.

An opportunity has arisen, quite unexpectedly, close to my homeland, in central Kentucky; a different edge of Appalachia. I may have a chance to take a slight change of direction, probably the last in my career. It seems like good timing. But I love my life here. I love what I do and the people I have the incredible honor to work with. And if I decide to make this move, it is a few years away—years I will need to prepare, allow my heart to settle in to this new idea. So, these summer days, I am just trying to feel my way into a decision.

Hearing Brenda's mom, I longed to be closer to my own mother and father, as they grow older, it would be wonderful to have more time with them. I feel the need to be closer in order to support them as they age. This change would put me halfway between the homes of my mother and my father.

I visited Kentucky this spring. I drove around, feeling the land. Although I have never lived in that exact place, it felt familiar. Driving back to East Glacier yesterday, the word home came into my mind, and, before I had time to think, I saw Appalachian soil. I looked out the windows of the car to the backbone of the earth, land I have also come to love, and tears came to my eyes.

I feel committed to the work I do here—to Indian Education for All—to working for liberty and justice for all. Talking with Lorraine yesterday, she said, "Yes, but you can do that work anywhere—it should be

everywhere.” And I agree. Is that why I’m being called away? Is it time to share my learning elsewhere, with people learning to be teachers, so they can then share with their students? I am listening hard for an answer.

I didn’t know exactly where all of these experiences were leading, but I became willing to just take a step, look around to see if things fell into place once the ground stopped vibrating, and then take the next step as it appeared before me. The path seemed to be unfolding on its own. I learned to enjoy waiting to see what would happen next, while I wrote and reflected about each part of my journey. During the 2010 Browning Summer Institute, I continued thinking and writing about my experiences in New York City and in Browning, Montana, trying to find ways to weave them together in my writing in the same way they were coming to feel intertwined in my life.

Echoes unpublished
by Wendy Zagray Warren

NYC 2010

Opulent chandeliers of crystal hang over the table
Where a group of teachers from around the country
Gathers in the former home of Olga Lengyel,
Auschwitz survivor.

At this table, we hear stories of the impossible,
Stories of hate beyond understanding,
Stories of genocide.
Gisela, Irving, survivors of the Nazi camps,
Clearly reliving their pain.
People forced into camps of death
For the crime of being Jewish.
Smoke and ash
Rained pieces of flesh
On their faces, their hair.
“I wanted to attach myself to a star
And fly away,” Gisela says.
“All those feelings I carry with me forever.”

We, the teachers in this group,
Have grown the comfortable closeness
Of any group that writes and shares.

Discussing the most difficult issues
Humanity offers up.
In this work,
We also must rest,
Laugh, celebrate life.
And so, one evening,
We visit Eisenberg's Sandwich Shop.

Squeezing our bags and our bodies
Down the long, narrow aisle
Created by counter and tables,
We snake our way to the back
Where the room opens.
A band, three women and a man
Is setting up
Drums, accordion, trumpet, clarinet and sax,
A Klezmer band, we are told.

We open menus to offerings
From the 1930's—and from today:
Pastrami and corned beef on rye,
Reuben with slaw,
Borscht, Matzo ball soup.

As the music begins,
So does the celebration.
The drummer, a small woman,
Curls protruding from black cloth hat,
Explains the origins of each song.
A people oppressed, dehumanized,
Driven from almost every place they have
Called home.
Clarinetist channels the souls of
Long-ago ancestors.
The instrument sings, soars,
Notes rise from her very being.
Resilient.

Browning, MT, 2010

Simple school desks are
arranged in a circle
Where a group of teachers from around the state
Gathers in a classroom
On the Blackfeet Nation.

At these desks, we hear stories of the impossible,
Stories of hate beyond understanding,
Stories of genocide.
Joe, Ramona,
Clearly reliving their pain.

We travel with them
To the banks of the Bear River.
Men, women, children murdered
By the U.S. Army,
For the crime of being Blackfeet.
Voices of children carried on the wind,
Laughing, playing,
Crying.
Bullets flew,
Lodges burned,
Ashes swept into the frigid January air.
A boy hid in a tree,
A girl in a tipi lining.
“Because that one girl would not give up,
Ramona says,
“We have generations of people.”

We, the teachers in this group,
Have grown the comfortable closeness
Of any group that writes and shares,
Discussing the most difficult issues
Humanity offers up.
In this work,
We also must rest,
Laugh, hope.
And so, one afternoon,
We attend a Sun Dance,
A celebration of life.

Carrying our chairs,
We settle in front of a tipi,
Close our eyes,
Breathe the healing herbs.
A lodge of willows
Surrounds a pole,
Sheltering drummers, dancers.

Songs rise over the valley, the mountains,
A people oppressed, dehumanized,
Driven from most of the places they have
Called home.
Drummers channel the souls of
Long-ago ancestors.
Singers' voices soar,
Notes rising from their very beings.
Resilient.

Living

“I’m a human being,” says Irving Roth, Nazi Holocaust survivor.
“I must live and love.

If I hate, they were successful.
If I hate, they have won.
We must find a way to reconcile
With one another.
That is the only solution.”
“We have to learn from this,” says Joe,
Bear River Massacre descendent.
“Every person involved deserves forgiveness.”

“Let us take the deaths from this massacre
As our greatest source of strength,” adds Ramona.
“Our Blackfeet children possess the fire
That will keep them strong forever.”

We’ve heard stories, these weeks,
Of life, of death, of resilience.
Survivors
Of Nazi genocide,
Of American genocide.
We’ve looked into each other’s eyes
And wept.

But we’ve also experienced life,
Cultures surviving and thriving,
Overcoming hate
Finding ways to continue
And strengthen,
Looking into the future
With hope.

Because of these experiences
We are different people
Than the ones who arrived
At this place.

We have received the gifts
Of people’s stories.
The telling has not been easy;
What else could they be, but gifts of love,
Somehow grown, over a lifetime,
Out of the ashes of hate?

As we part ways, for now,
We carry these stories with us,
Holding in our memories
The eyes, the hearts,
Of the people who have told them.

They are gifts that have been given in trust.
It is up to us to pass them on, to our families,
To our friends, to our students,

In the same spirit of generosity and love
In which they were given.
Together, we must find ways to make better lives
For our children.

Perspective-Taking: Paying It Forward

In 2010-2011, a group from the Montana Writing Project Leadership Team answered the call from MWP Director Heather Bruce to draft chapters for a book which would tell the story of our site's work with Indian Education for All for an audience of teachers across the nation. Our goal was to mesh theory with practice, focusing on our classroom experiences. The piece that follows is the chapter I submitted to *Indigenous Literacies Are for Everyone*, edited by Heather Bruce. Some of the themes from previous pieces of writing are beginning to repeat themselves in different forms, weaving themselves throughout my work—and throughout my life.

Choosing to See: Perspective and the Power of Story 2010

Wendy Zagray Warren

Once you've experienced one other way of seeing, you begin to realize there are many different ways to describe the universe, many different ways to transmit knowledge. And then you may begin to think about the fact that while our methods of transmitting knowledge are very good, they can also exclude a great many things, which could be of importance to us. Thinking about this, you may begin to ask whether many of these things are willfully excluded, not on a level of individual but cultural will.

—(Sandra Lopez, 2004, 224.) From *Stirring Up Justice*, by Jessica Singer Early, p. 42

A Simple Question

“Will you come in and explain to my students why we have an American Indian Heritage Day?” the teacher next door asks. It is the last Friday in September, American Indian Heritage Day in Montana. It is my prep period; I am at my desk, immersed in my plans for the day. “A student asked, and I don't really know how to give a good answer,” she says.

I stumble over my words a bit. Right now? Unprepared? I'm not sure I've formulated my ideas about this well enough to be able to express them. But here she is, asking. I am Indian Education for All Coordinator for the district. I have done quite a bit of teaching in other buildings; people in the Middle School where I teach have seemed reluctant to approach me. I know I have to do this. “Sure,” I say, and stand, not knowing what I will say.

I enter the room, and there sits a group of rather difficult eighth graders, one of whom had asked the question. So I begin talking about how I wish there didn't need to be an American Indian or Latino or African American Heritage day, but at the moment such days exist because our educational system is

modeled on European values and culture, and subjects are often taught only from a European perspective. A few of the kids roll their eyes and put their heads on their desks. Others listen intently. A boy with the darkest skin I've ever seen in our school leans forward. "Our country is a great experiment," I continue. "It has the most diverse mix of people of any country on earth. In my opinion, that is one of our greatest strengths. But it means that there are many different perspectives about the world and many different ways people live. If we could all learn from one another, this would be a remarkable opportunity. What happens most often, though, in schools, is that we pretend there is only one perspective: a European perspective and that's all. Right? You learn that 'our' history began when Columbus landed in Hispaniola, and we ignore the 12 to 15,000 years of the human history of this land before that. So these designated days—to honor peoples of non-European origin—are really to remind your *teachers* to consider other perspectives—for at least one day out of the school year. The goal, of course, is that we begin to consider multiple perspectives every day, in all of our teaching, so that these 'special honoring days' become unnecessary."

As has become my habit when I visit classrooms in my role as Indian Education for All Coordinator, I ask for students to raise their hands if they know they have some Native heritage. About a third of the hands go up—a percentage I have come to expect. I say, "Keep your hands up if you know what tribe," and I ask the students whose hands remain in the air to share that information, if they want to. It is when he names his tribe that I learn the dark-skinned boy is African. I always watch the teacher closely for signs of surprise when students share this information. I teach in a district that sees itself as having very few Native kids. In fact, a relatively small number of students self-select "American Indian" on the school form, but I find much higher numbers when I ask the question. As I've learned more of the history of Indians and public schooling in this country, I've come to understand some of the reasons that might be true.

I look over at Kelsey, the history teacher, to see how I'm doing. She nods, and pushes the student's thinking a bit further. "Isn't it strange," she says, "that we spend so much time in this school studying the Nazi Holocaust, but we rarely talk about the genocide of Native peoples in this country?"

I smile, so proud to have her as a colleague.

A girl nods and says, "Last year in reading, after we studied the Holocaust, Ms. DiMaio talked about that. She said in Germany, they sometimes don't teach about the Nazi Holocaust, and here we don't teach about the genocide of Native peoples."

My heart leaps. The message is getting through—and kids are carrying it with them. I reply, "And the reason it's important to study these difficult things is that we need to make decisions about what kind of a future we want. If we ignore the past, the stereotypes, the prejudice, the racism some of us can see, continues. But if we learn as many parts of the story of this land as possible, we can make informed decisions about the present and the future—and decide how to act: how to treat others, how to find harmony and learn from all the diverse peoples of our nation. If we study the truth about the wounds of the past, and take responsibility for our actions as a nation, then we all might begin to heal."

What Once Seemed Simple...

Every Communication Arts curriculum I have seen asks that students learn to view things from different perspectives, beginning in about fourth grade—as if this is an easy task. Learning the skills of perspective taking requires that a student be able to take a step outside of self—to know that the world as seen through his or her eyes is not the world everyone sees. I know many adults who do not yet have this ability, and it is a concept quite difficult for my seventh graders to grasp. Classroom lessons on perspective-taking are often superficial; a one-time-only event—something to check off a list: "Today,

class, we are going to practice perspective-taking.” Being able, and perhaps more importantly, willing, to work to understand a perspective different than one’s own is, however, a complicated and often frightening prospect. For me, it is a life-long journey.

So while a starting point for younger students to consider a given issue from various perspectives might seem superficial, the learning can’t end there. Perspective-taking is one of the themes that might weave its way through an entire school year, throughout the curriculum, increasing in complexity as it spirals upward through the grade levels, taught in contexts that reveal the important and relevant reasons for learning the skill in the first place. Conversations about classroom behaviors as well as about literature, and discussions of issues both contemporary and historic, provide opportunities for practice.

Analyzing perspective is an important way to reveal the complexities of human interactions for students who often try to simplify. We can learn to see issues as prisms, and realize that our perspective allows us to see through just one cut of the glass. Such a narrow view not only limits personal possibilities, it also limits the possibilities of democracy—in any size community. The ability to take on other perspectives can lead to empathy, countering the dehumanization of people perceived to be “not like us.” We can come to understand that only when a prism’s individual cuts of glass are seen as a whole, can rainbows shine through.

Multicultural Education expert James Banks writes about four approaches to the integration of multicultural content: Contributions, Additive, Transformation and Social Justice. Rather than simply designating a day, such as American Indian Heritage Day, or adding multicultural content to what we already teach, Banks contends that teachers might instead strive to achieve Transformation and Social Justice in our classrooms. Transformation asks teachers to notice the “Euro-centric” perspective of almost all curricular content, and to transform our teaching in ways that ensure we ask students continuously to view things from the multiple perspectives that are the reality of our country. Until students see the whole picture, they can’t take an informed stance or make any kind of personal judgment about an issue, let alone decide how to act. And taking action is exactly what the level of Social Justice asks students to do. Teachers guide students to reflect on how they might act on a problem related to a unit of study or an issue of their own choosing (Elser, p 8).

What a complicated—and essential—proposition. How do we, as teachers, even get ourselves to these levels of understanding, let alone our students? Truly, this is the steep path of Indian Education for All. And the journey can’t begin until we take the first step.

Teacher Transformation: The Power of Story

I have an entire lifetime of learning to make up for, when it comes to the history of this land. In some cases it involves unlearning the misconceptions I have been taught. So how is my thinking, and that of some of my fellow teachers, evolving? What acts as catalyst for teacher transformation? I certainly haven’t always been in the place I now stand. I am White. I was raised in a Christian culture. I teach in Columbia Falls, Montana, a town and a school district that sees itself as composed primarily of White Christians. When Indian Education for All was funded in Montana, many people in my district, me included, didn’t see the need. The prevailing attitude was: “We have few Native kids here...what does *this* have to do with *us*?”

Looking at these questions now, I see that clearly, we misunderstood.

Indian Education for All is not for or about exclusively Indian students. It is not for or about only White students. I’ve come to understand that Indian Education for All (IEFA) is for me, my colleagues and all Montanans—indeed it is for all peoples of this nation. IEFA has helped me to recognize that the way I’ve

learned to see the world is not *the* way to see the world. It's about choosing to see what has been right in front of me all along. America is not composed only of White, Christian people. But if you are White and Christian and have chosen to surround yourself with other White, Christian people, surprisingly, this simple fact may not be immediately obvious. White, Christian perspectives are everywhere; I have to dig to find anything else. Indian Education for All is an opportunity that hands us a shovel. The digging is up to us. But what is it that might move us to take that first step—to work that shovel point into the dirt? Author Lee Ann Bell suggests one starting point utilizes the power of story.

Loosening the Soil: Recognizing Stock Stories and Concealed Stories

“History is the struggle over who has the authority to tell the stories that define us.”

Levins Morales, 1998, p. 5 a quoted in Bell, *Storytelling for Social Justice*, p. 43

Teacher and writer Lee Ann Bell helped me define something that has become a part of my awareness and experience because of Indian Education for All. In *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*, Bell introduces the concept of stock stories. Bell writes, “Stock stories are the tales told by the dominant group, passed on through historical and literary documents, and celebrated through public rituals, law, the arts, education and media” (p. 23). One example Bell gives to illustrate a stock story is that of the American Dream. In America, the story goes, all people have the opportunity to get ahead if they work hard enough. If people will only pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, they can ensure that their children have better lives (p. 37). She writes, “Stock stories affirm, albeit often unconsciously and obliquely, the superiority of the stock of whiteness. As the group defined as normal..., stock stories operate to confirm and benefit Whites as the “natural” and deserving beneficiaries of the racial status quo in the United States” (Bell, p. 30).

Countering these stock stories are what Bell terms “concealed stories.” Bell writes, “...these stories are just beneath the surface; not so much unknown as constantly overshadowed, pushed back into the margins, conveniently “forgotten” or repressed...Concealed stories disconcert stock stories, challenging their smug complacency and assumed normality by insisting on a different accounting of experience” (Bell, p. 44). Concealed stories are literally everywhere, ‘hidden in plain view’ (Loewen, 2006), familiar within communities of color but mostly invisible or overlooked in the mainstream. Sometimes these stories may be suppressed, consciously or unconsciously, to avoid traumatic and painful memories of dehumanization by those on the receiving end of racism, or to evade the guilt and moral responsibility of the beneficiaries of a stratified racial system, but they are there to be recovered (Bell, p. 48).

Like most White people, I have been suckled on stock stories. Indian Education for All has provided me the opportunity to wean myself—to hear the perspectives of the concealed and counter stories which make up the history of this country as well as our contemporary reality. Perhaps it is in the stories of others that we can best come to see worlds we would not otherwise be able to access.

Like Lee Ann Bell, I have come to see story as at least one of the essential elements in the process of teacher transformation—in learning to see from a different perspective. This kind of transformation in teachers seems a necessary first step before we can begin the work with our students. So how did I come to stand in this new place? Perhaps introspection into my own ongoing process of transformation will suggest strategies I might use in my seventh grade classroom.

Learning to See: Concealed Stories

A few years ago, I drove over the mountains to Browning, Montana, my stomach churning. I had been asked to co-direct a Montana Writing Project Summer Institute on the Blackfeet Nation, facilitating

teachers' learning about the teaching of writing as well as issues of cultural reconciliation. I had no idea what awaited me. I chose to think of it as an adventure rather than acknowledge that I was scared to death.

The institute unfolded with the writing and sharing that is a part of every National Writing Project Summer Institute, but I felt myself quickly drawn into a whole new spiral of learning. I heard personal stories, from both leaders and participants, of things I had never known. Indian Boarding Schools, allotment, starvation, massacres—Federal Indian Policies intended to erase a people—force them to either blend into the proverbial American Melting Pot—or eliminate them. I realized this as nothing short of genocide. I was saddened, sickened, guilt-ridden. I hung on every word, trying to absorb the experiences of the people in the room. Why hadn't I heard these stories before—about the lives of these neighbors I rarely see? They were telling me the history of this land, of this country, a history I thought I knew. I came to realize I had been mis-educated, lied to, and my anger grew. I thought I lived in a democracy. How could I help to shape the present or the future of this country when I had learned to see only one perspective? Clearly, the educational system had not invested in teaching me about the history of *all* the people of this country.

My response? I began to read, voraciously, learning as much as I could about the history of Native peoples of this land. I learned more stories that have been concealed from my view, stories that are often painful. I thought hard about the purpose of education—and about the power involved in who controls the perspectives offered in textbooks and in the stock stories that have passed now through generations. I wondered why these stock stories have taken the form they have? Why are the most difficult stories of our history as a country concealed? Aren't these the very stories we can learn from—that might make us stronger as a nation?

One of the books I read during this time seemed, on the surface, to be completely disconnected from Indian Education for All. As I read Sondra Perl's *On Austrian Soil: Teaching Those I Was Taught to Hate*, a flash of memory took me back to the college year I spent as an exchange student in Salzburg, Austria. A conversation became clear in my mind. My roommate was a young Austrian woman studying to become a teacher. After a visit to Dachau, I was eager to talk with her about the topic of the Nazi Holocaust, and the German Anschluss of Austria. I was eager to gain her perspective on this history of her people—this time of horror. I wondered what she had learned about it in school, and in the back of my mind, I wondered about her parents, who surely had lived through the experience, and who may even have been Nazis. Perhaps she felt an accusation behind my words as I began my questions, because her reaction was swift and unexpected.

"Why do you ask about this?" her voice squealed. "This is in the past. This has no effect on anything in Austria today. We don't study this in school—of course not. It has nothing to do with us. I was not yet born. What is done is done. We should move forward."

My mind reeled. I had never questioned the value of learning about the Nazi Holocaust. Surely, there were many lessons for the present that could be drawn from studying this past. I knew that was why I had studied about the Nazi Holocaust in school in the States. The connection between past and present had been clearly drawn for me in those studies. I had assumed it would be taught much the same way in Europe, those same connections clearly drawn. Apparently, I was mistaken. Where, in the words of my roommate, was the empathy I had always heard expressed for the Jewish people whose lives had been extinguished? Why this angry reaction from this young woman who would soon be a teacher? Not having answers, I tucked this memory away.

That it has re-emerged now, in the context of Indian Education for All, is telling. Clearly, it is much easier to look at evil that occurs outside one's own country. It is much more difficult to look evils at home straight in the eye. But the story of a place includes the story of its people. Our lives in the present are

affected by that past, whether we acknowledge it or not. Perhaps, for this, I must rely on peripheral vision. Maybe there are things too painful to look at straight on.

But, for all the same reasons it is important to teach the Nazi Holocaust in Europe, it seems crucial that I find a way to see. I recognize now why our stock stories read the way they do. When one group of people is displaced or wiped out, another moves in and benefits from that which was taken. This was certainly true in Europe as the result of the Nazi Holocaust, and, clearly, it is the story of this soil as well. What shaped the ground continues to shape us. But in this story, I am one of the benefactors. No wonder this is so hard to face.

Our American stock stories shield our eyes—encourage us to continue to look away. Indian Education for All is asking us to turn our heads toward truth. But looking and seeing are two different things. Seeing involves the ability to take on the perspective of others. If our country has any hope of reaping the benefits of a multi-cultural nation, my students surely need to begin this complex process of learning to see from different perspectives earlier in life than I have. My challenge is to find ways to begin teaching the skill of perspective-taking to my seventh grade students.

Teaching What's Important: First Steps Toward Teaching Perspective-Taking

I use illustrated books quite often in my teaching of Middle School students. It is amazing the lessons that can be found compacted into a few pages. Illustrated books are often far from “simple.” Indeed, the vast complexity of human nature, of literary elements, and of styles of writing—can be found and teased apart after reading these relatively short stories. And my students love them.

Early in the year, I read my seventh graders *The True Story of The Three Little Pigs*, by John Scieska. As they enter the room for class, a student will see the book on the whiteboard tray, and, remembering it from previous years, say, “Are you gonna’ read that book to us today? I love that book!”

“I’ll bet lots of you have heard it,” I say, enjoying the building anticipation, “and yes, I’m going to read it. But we’re going to think about it in a different way than you probably did when you were younger.”

We begin with our daily ritual, a time my students have dubbed “Freedom to Speak”—a daily opportunity to share with each other our lives outside of school. This functions in much the same way as a Talking Circle, and we pass a braid of Sweetgrass, which as the Talking Stick. The person with the Sweetgrass braid has the floor to share whatever is on their mind--or not. Everyone else in the room practices listening.

Next, I write the word *perspective* on the board. I smile, recognizing the perspectives that have already been raised in this time of daily sharing—time we hold sacred.

“This book is written by John Scieszka and illustrated by Lane Smith,” I begin. “But on the first page, it says its written by A. Wolf. Get it?”

The students nod, roll their eyes, and I begin reading. A few pages into the book, I ask,” So who is telling the story here?”

“The wolf,” they say.

“Yes. So this is the story of what happened from the wolf’s perspective. So what does the wolf say he wants?”

“A cup of sugar.”

“Whose perspective of this story do we usually hear?”

“The *pigs*,” they chorus, intuiting, experiencing, the meaning of the term.

No question there....”And what did they want?”

A pause... “To live—to not be eaten by the wolf,” one student calls out.

Clearly, the students are getting this, and I continue to read. Near the end of the book, another perspective enters. In the voice of the wolf, we learn that the reporters were out for a good story—one that would sell newspapers—and that’s when he became known as the “Big, Bad Wolf”—out to eat as many pigs as possible. Of course, the Wolf thinks he has been completely misrepresented by the media—who learned only one side of the story. The addition of the perspective of the media can take this lesson in all kinds of interesting directions, including conversations about the important role the media can and should play in a democracy.

After reading, we write these three perspectives on the board, labeling what each party wanted. An idea for further extending the notion of perspective came to my attention when reading an article in *Rethinking Multi-Cultural Education*, by Rethinking Schools. Perspective-taking is often an exercise in close reading and critical literacy, which asks us to also examine assumptions made by the author, due to his own stance—adding yet another perspective.

“In the story I’ve always heard,” I say, “as well as in this story, the author made an assumption about that the kind of house that is ‘best.’ In fact, he says that the other pigs were fools for building any other kind of house. What kind of house does he imply is better than any other?”

“Brick!” the students’ voices come as one.

“But let’s question that assumption. Can you think of a time that a straw or a stick house might meet a person’s needs better than a brick house?”

Hands go up around the room, and particularly from students who engage only when something reaches out and grabs them. This opportunity to question what has been presented as “truth” seems to get their attention. “Yea—what if the house is in a very hot place? Sticks and straw would let air through much better than brick.”

Images of brick ovens come into my vision and I nod.

”And what if there is an earthquake?” another student says, “I’d sure rather have sticks or straw fall on me than a bunch of bricks.”

“The kind of house you build might depend on what you can find where you live. Like people built sod houses a long time ago on the plains. And people are building straw houses now. I know someone building a straw bale house,” another student says.

I’m pleased. This is a good start.

Going Deeper

The next book I use to discuss perspective is *Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship and Freedom*, by Tom Tingle—another illustrated book. *Crossing Bok Chitto* is set in Mississippi. Bok Chitto is a river. On one side of the river, there is a slave plantation. On the other side is a Choctaw community—and freedom. The story is of a friendship between a Choctaw girl and a boy whose family is enslaved, and how the two work together to secure freedom for the slave family just before the mother is sold to another plantation. The women of the Choctaw community are instrumental in executing the escape. Clearly, it is not the first time runaway slaves have been aided by the Choctaw. Three clear perspectives can be seen in the story: that of the enslaved family, that of the Choctaw girl’s community, and that of the slave owner. It is a story with many entry points for students. It is a story of empowerment.

Students think through the various perspectives, answering questions about what each group wants in this situation and what motives might lay beneath their actions. With the addition of just a little background on the history of the relationships between these groups (some of which Tingle includes in the back of the book), it is impossible to avoid coming to the realization that these are two groups of oppressed people—oppressed by Whites and by the U.S. government. Because one group aides the other group in overcoming this oppression—in escaping to freedom—the story is a noteworthy example of the power of people working together.

As Language Arts educators, we choose the content through which we teach the skills of close reading and about which our students write. It makes sense to select texts that tell a deeper story—to use these selections as one way of revealing the concealed stories in our midst. I recently shared *Crossing Bok Chitto* with a diverse group of college freshmen in an Education class with the same purpose—as a way of teaching perspective-taking. One of the students later wrote that this was one of most significant learning experiences of her semester.

The Roles We Choose

When it seems students are coming to understand that people’s perspectives are often different from one another, they are ready to take the important step of beginning to examine their own perspectives. Author Juno Diaz, in a talk to a group of educators at an NCTE Convention in Philadelphia, said “Teachers teach civilization into existence.” I found myself sinking into my seat with the thought that I will never live up to such a huge responsibility. I recognize that I have tried to take it on, though. One way is by asking students to examine their own identities—the sources of their own perspectives—and to analyze the behavior they choose every minute of every day.

In studying the Nazi Holocaust, people’s behaviors are often categorized into “roles.” The terms target (or victim), perpetrator, ally (or upstander) and bystander originate from Holocaust Studies. These terms, or something close to them, have now been applied as a way to examine many situations. They are commonly used in bullying prevention curricula, for example, and they provide useful ways of analyzing actions of self and actions of others.

In *Teaching for Joy and Justice*, Linda Christensen includes examples of non-fiction writing her high school students have engaged in, using these roles, target, perpetrator, ally, bystander as a starting point. In the chapter “Acting for Justice,” Christensen describes asking her students to think of experiences in their lives where they can identify these roles people played. From this memory, they write narratives of injustice, telling their own stories. After writing and revising, they share their stories in small groups—each group working together to think of ways the outcome of injustice may have been different—ways someone or a group might have acted for justice. Through their ideas for this imaginary intervention, students learn ways they might choose to respond in the future (p. 85-103).

In my own classroom, I use a study of events leading up to the Nazi Holocaust and then Christensen's work as a starting point for students to examine choices about their own behavior. I remind them that they choose the roles they play (with the possible exception of target, which is sometimes beyond their control), and that at any time and in any situation, they can make a different choice. This is one way of helping them see that they are not locked into a role, that they are in control of this aspect of their lives, and that others react to them according to the roles they choose to take on in a given moment.

After almost an entire school year where these roles are revisited in different contexts, I invite my seventh grade students to create works of fiction, wrapping character and plot around these roles. Each story might have a person who is target by a perpetrator, a bystander or two, and someone who acts as an ally. Indeed, this work of fiction is a practice in perspective-taking. The author has to consider each character's perspective, the perceived role that motivates a character to action. When settling on the story's theme, authors are taking a stance with regard to the topic they have chosen. They have to look ahead, as they write, considering possible outcomes of their characters' choices. Perhaps, despite the social danger, an ally decides to step in to support a person who is targeted; perhaps a bystander is later filled with remorse. In playing out these roles in a work of fiction, students can practice on paper what they may then decide to practice, or avoid, in the world.

True confessions

Thomas Newkirk, in *Holding onto Good Ideas in a Time of Bad Ones: Six Literacy Practices Worth Fighting For*, writes of the importance of teachers processing together all that is difficult in the teaching profession (pp. 157-174). Too often, especially of late, teachers expect to be superheroes. We don't need anyone else to hold us up to this standard; we do it to ourselves. As a result, we are too often demoralized when our most carefully laid plans don't work quite the way we wanted them to. We are, after all, working with unpredictable human beings.

So it is important to say this: It is my lofty plan to convince my students that by carefully examining their own perspective and learning to see from the perspectives of others, by analyzing and then modifying their own behavior to more often choose to act as allies, they will change the world. Most of the time I fail. I believe it; they don't. Students tell me that what they do doesn't matter a hill of beans. They think I'm an incurable optimist or, in the sarcastic words of one of my students, "the most politically correct person I know."

But still I continue. Perhaps my students are right about my incurable optimism. I do believe our system of public education is this country's best hope of dreaming the world we want and then slowly working our way toward that vision. I believe in the promise of social justice inherent in Montana's Indian Education for All law. I can only hope that, as my seventh graders grow and mature, a seed has been planted in each of them. I may never see those seeds sprout and blossom, but I have to trust that at least a few of them will. A teacher's resilience is found somewhere within that hope.

Worlds Apart But Not Strangers: Holocaust Education and Indian Education for All

In 2010, Brenda and I were invited back to New York City as part of the first leadership team of Holocaust Educators from the Memorial Library. The goals for each of the five teams selected from around the country were to continue our learning about Holocaust Education, utilizing the many resources NYC has to offer as well as the expertise of the HEN directors

Sondra Perl and Jennifer Lemberg. We also were there to carry out the next step of the Memorial Library's dream: planning for satellite summer seminars focused on Holocaust and Social Justice Education to bring to teachers in our respective states. Each of the satellites would have a regional focus. Our focus, clearly, would be in helping teachers make connections between Holocaust Education and Indian Education for All. In planning our seminar, we also wanted to emphasize the connections between past and present, asking teachers and their students to consider their daily interactions with one another. The roles of target, perpetrator, upstander and bystander that have emerged from Holocaust scholarship are not just ways to describe choices people made during the Holocaust; they also reflect the choices people make today. By studying the consequences of racism and other forms of social injustice in the past, our hope is that teachers and students will take the lead in working toward the humane treatment of others in the present, and to carry that hope into the future. The following reflection shows my contemplations turning increasingly toward what it means to facilitate seminars with fellow educators and other adult learners.

NYC A reflection HEN Leadership Institute 2010 unpublished
by Wendy Zagray Warren

When people share sacred stories—so many people: Holocaust survivors Gisa and Irving, Holocaust educators Bjorn and Karen, Blackfeet elders Joe, Phyllis and Elsie, and all the teachers we invite to join us in this work—I feel an obligation which is also sacred. What an incredible honor it is to exercise my right to take responsibility to carry on this work. And that sense of both honor and obligation has grown this week. I am so thankful for this network of talented, committed people who will help me continue to learn and grow. I see so clearly this is not something I can do on my own. I am so grateful to be working with Brenda, who shares with me so gently a world to which I have been so blind for so long. I have moved to a point where I can more carefully consider my unearned privilege, and more consciously face the alternatives before me in light of that knowledge.

I find myself studying, more intently each year, what it means to be a teacher—of young students and also of adults. I am coming to see the temptation to proselytize the ideas about which you feel strongly. On the way here this morning, Brenda and I talked about people in certain religious orders feeling a need to convert people in a way that often turns people off. They come on too strongly, seem too sure of themselves, from a position of a place that is either black or white, saved or unsaved, no complication. It's easy to see in others what you sometimes cannot see in yourself. In my district, when I facilitate

professional development for teachers on Indian Education for All topics, trying to create multiple entry points for people, I have learned the importance of approaching topics gently. We read and discuss books together, giving rise to fascinating conversations on topics I never dreamed I would be able to discuss openly with my colleagues. Bony appendages are beginning to peak out of slightly open closet doors.

I have tried to approach my work in our summer institute, which really are exercises in cultural reconciliation, just has gently. I am learning, slowly, how to listen, and to stay flexible enough to let that careful listening guide the direction of what might happen next. I am learning, slowly, that my place at the table is beside many others, who I can learn from only if I stay silent, making sure there is room for everyone's voice, and listening as carefully as I can. I'm not always very good at that.

Sondra, Jennifer, and now, I see, Bjorn Krondorfer, are masters of that kind of teaching. Both years, I have watched carefully a style of leadership I strive to emulate; this year I have been more aware of it than ever. I want to ask all of you to keep thinking out loud about the leadership styles you choose to take on in your institutes, so I can keep learning. I want to keep asking questions, to crack open what is often hidden—the careful and thoughtful planning it takes in order to be a guide and a thinking partner—asking just the right question at just the right time—in order to nudge people in a certain direction, slowly enough that they are not too uncomfortable, but at the same time, asking them to stretch a bit farther than they thought possible. I want to remain aware that I am a learner, I am a teacher, and most of all, I am a human being in the presence of the beauty of so many others.

In the summer of 2011, the Montana seminar *Worlds Apart But Not Strangers, Holocaust Education and Indian Education for All*, sponsored by the Memorial Library and the Montana Writing Project, made its debut. Held on the campus of the University of Montana and in Missoula's Har Shalom synagogue, attended by twenty-two teachers from around the state, the Worlds Apart seminar was a great success. A video of the seminar can be viewed on the Montana Writing Project website at http://www.cas.umt.edu/english/mwp/worlds_apart.cfm. Returning home from the Worlds Apart seminar, still focused on the intersections between Indian Education for All and the Holocaust as well as of past and present, a brief encounter inspired the following poem.

Hidden unpublished
by Wendy Zagray Warren

A dark-haired woman we haven't met
greet us, then guesses,
correctly, which of the dogs
she has lovingly cared for
we have come to take home.

In reply to her polite question
about our travels,
the word

Holocaust

floats into the air.

She grabs on,
holds tightly...

is carried out of hiding.

"I'm a closeted Jew."
These exact words
escape.

I blink,
gaze through her eyes,
the room's window,

the treed landscape
of northwest Montana,
over mountains, across plains

To the coast
where the S.S. St. Louis wanders still,

begging for safe harbor
in the land of the free.

Even now, it is turned away.

Performance Poetry: A Trail That Diverged

Two thousand and eleven was also the summer I first attended the Creative Pulse, the program I selected in order to obtain the Masters Degree necessary to be able to apply for a position at Berea College, if one became available. I should have known, however, that this experience would be so much more than that. I found myself stretched in all kinds of new directions...pushing my writing as hard as I could one week, acting during another, creating a digital story and sharing it with the group, and finally getting on a stage—a STAGE—and performing the poetry I had written and revised during the previous four weeks.

I thought that poetry would become the focus of my Final Creative Project. Randy Bolton challenged me to keep writing, to create a manuscript of poetry to send out for publication. Jillian Campana suggested performing those poems somewhere, even if that meant posting them on YouTube. I was excited to work with my students on performance poetry, and, knowing I had Berea in mind and that it would be helpful to be working on writing for publication, Jillian suggested writing a professional article about that process. Working with my students on Performance Poetry seemed the perfect way to blend the social justice content to which I had become committed and the skills of writing and speaking that were a part of my teaching curriculum. And so I began.

Early in the year, I began working with my students on confidence-building creative drama exercises, utilizing Viola Spolin's book *Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook*. Knowing that not all of my students would enjoy performance poetry, I also volunteered to teach in an after school program, where I offered a creative writing/poetry performance class. The scope and sequence of activities I created were to be field tested in these two settings. In addition, I continued to read poetry of many kinds, written by many different poets. I watched YouTube performances and videos of performance poetry by performance artists. I scanned texts focused especially on the part of this project with which I was least familiar—creative drama, particularly as applied to the area of social justice. I reviewed texts which have become anchors for me in the teaching of writing, and also inform my own work as a writer, including books by Linda Christensen, Mem Fox, Natalie Goldberg and Georgia Heard.

Around late November, I began to realize that the performance poetry project wasn't going as well as I had hoped. I had carefully laid out series of warm-up activities and creative drama. I had written my own poetry and performed many poems for my students. I had showed

them video clips of Slam poetry by both adults and students performing original poetry. They had warmed up to performance by performing a poem written by another author before attempting to perform an original poem. Despite all of this, my seventh grade students' poetry performances were, for the most part, more like readings than performances. I had forgotten something key: my students are twelve turning thirteen years old, confronted with the greatest peer pressure and the harshest self-criticism they will face in their lives (Apter 2006). I began to suspect that it would take more time and effort than anticipated to increase the confidence of these pre-teens to the point where they could actually perform a poem. I didn't have a full school year to devote to this project; there were other skills and writing genres I needed to teach. I came to realize that it would likely take a year or more for these pre-adolescent students to be ready to perform to the level of my hopes and expectations.

I did know from the start that performance poetry may not work as a whole-class project, so I had planned the afterschool program as a backup. There, I had hoped to work with a number of students who were especially interested in poetry performance, but that, too, proved not to be the case. Only three students attended the after school program consistently, and, while we established a close relationship, none of them were interested in working exclusively on performance poetry. By mid-December, the boiler went out in the building where the after school program was held; a hiatus was called until after the Winter Holidays, and the program never started up again.

Doors Opening

All indicators were suggesting that the focus of my Final Creative Project should change, and just at that time, I found that a position for which I could apply would, indeed, open at Berea College, the small college with a strong commitment to the social justice where my mentor

Bobby Starnes had gone after our non-profit organization, Full Circle, folded. With that possibility solidifying, my focus changed as well. While I had some publications already on my CV, I knew that it would be best if I had works in progress—all different types of writing, but a focus on educational articles would best—and even better if some more recent pieces had been accepted for publication. I had been working on writing and revising my own poetry as part of my original project proposal. I decided that I should put my work out there; I should write and revise poems and articles I could submit for publication. I also knew that I wanted to offer myself the gift of reflection. My learning journey of the past few years had been fast and furious. I wanted to take the time to look back, considering how I had come to this place where I might be ready to apply for a position in higher education. I realized that I could shape my Creative Pulse Final Project to do two things: challenge myself to write and submit pieces for publication, and find a way to weave those pieces together into a multi-genre reflection of personal and professional growth.

In October, I had submitted three poems to the *Whitefish Review*. In December, I received my first rejection letter (see Appendix). While somewhat disappointed, I was not surprised. I know that rejection is a part of writing for publication.

I became intrigued this whole notion; this world of publication. It seemed at times like an experiment in psychology, trying to determine what a publisher might be looking for. I had read that chances of getting pieces published in a themed issue of a journal or literary magazine was easier, so I began perusing calls for manuscripts in educational journals as well as local publications which include poetry. I had been working and re-working more poems, and it was at this point that I decided I should broaden my scope to include different genres of writing. During the school year of 2010-2011, I had sent out articles to NCTE's *English Journal* as well

as *Rethinking Schools*, and had received kind and informative rejection letters from both.

Considering these letters part of my learning process, I kept my eyes open for new opportunities.

I read through my writing from the past, revised older works and created new pieces in many genres. I came to see the writing I have done in recent years as markers of my growth.

This realization is what led to the project you now see before you. Some of these pieces have been submitted for publication, yes. Most have been rejected, but a few important pieces have been accepted. But the project has become so much more. Each of these pieces are threads in a cloth which, woven together, tell my story. I also hope that while the pieces show my growth as a person, they also mark my growth as a writer. In some cases, I've included pieces, especially poetry, that I think I've grown beyond. Rather than revise them, in most cases, I included them as written, as indicators of my position at a given point in time. And so the story continues...

In mid-November of this year, I sent a short article for the "Teacher to Teacher" column of NCTE's *English Journal*, themed "Preventing Bullying Behaviors." Titled, "From the Holocaust to Civil Rights to Our School's Hallways," the article shares a brief overview of ways in which I tie these themes together in my classroom.

From the Holocaust to Civil Rights to Our School's Hallways submitted to *English Journal*, "Teacher to Teacher" section for themed issue on addressing bullying behavior (still in review)
by Wendy Zagray Warren

Literature provides opportunities for students to analyze the behavior of others, creating entry points for conversations about their own choices regarding acts of bullying. Roles often used to discuss the bully circle: perpetrator, target, bystander, ally or upstander, arise from literature of the Holocaust. Nonfiction accounts of survivors, such as Irving and Edward Roth's *Bondi's Brother*, provide students a lens through which to view the horrific extent to which acts of hate can reach—that of genocide. *Bondi's Brother* also allows students to examine the gradual progression of actions taken by Nazi Germany in an attempt to dehumanize Jews. At each "signpost along the road to Auschwitz"(Irving Roth), one can analyze roles played by both individuals and governments—leading to the important understanding that bullying behavior can be perpetrated by groups as well as individuals. While honoring those who acted as allies, we ponder the possibilities. What if more individuals and governments around the world had chosen to stand with the Jewish community? Might they, collectively, have blocked that road?

Once students clearly understand the roles, this knowledge can be transferred. We move one step closer to the hallways of our own school by reading *Warriors Don't Cry*, by Melba Pattillo Beals. Beals

was one of nine African-American students who braved angry crowds of adults and hallways of hostile peers in order to integrate Little Rock High School. My students are outraged at the treatment of the nine, and again we honor the courage of those who stood with them.

As we move the conversation to our own school community, my students create a list of groups dehumanized in our own hallways. Disturbing as it is, this list opens discussion about the choices each of us makes, every minute of every day, as to the roles we choose when someone is being mistreated. If we ever find the courage to stand together, I ask, what kind of future might we create?

In October I had received a list-serve call for proposals for chapters for a book called *The Poor are not the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, to be edited by a social justice educator I had long admired, Paul Gorski. I had copied the call and tucked it away in my computer files. The deadline for proposals was December 15, so in late November, I pulled it out again and began brainstorming. Three clear ideas emerged from that work, so, because each proposal was limited to one page in length, I decided to write and send three proposals, in the hopes that one of them might align with their book plans (see Appendix). I was encouraged when, after emailing the three proposals to co-editor Julie Landsman, I heard from her within about twenty minutes. She said she loved all three of the proposals and that she was sure they could use at least one of them. She said they would review all proposals in January and would be back in touch with me then.

Buoyed by this potential success on the horizon, I kept at it. Both the *Whitefish Review* and University of Montana's *Cutbank Literary Journal* were open for submissions. In January, I sent the same three poems the *Whitefish Review* had rejected, pieces that I had written and revised while participating in the Creative Pulse, to *Cutbank*. Although I received a rejection letter from them in early April, it seemed from their letter that they had carefully considered my poems, and encouraged me to submit my work again (see Appendix). Since these three poems relate specifically to my learning about Indian Education for All, I knew it might be difficult to find just the right niche for them. Perhaps there will be a place for these poems in *Indigenous*

Literacies Are for Everyone, the book by the MWP Leadership Team that will be edited by Heather Bruce.

St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Missoula, Montana, 2011 submitted and rejected by *Whitefish Review*,
Cutbank

by Wendy Zagray Warren

"May peace prevail on earth." --from an obelisk in front of St. Francis Cathedral, Missoula, Montana, 2011, written in Hebrew, Arabic, Latin and English.

St. Francis is a gentle man,
he summons the little children and they come to him.
Missoula's Cathedral takes his name in vain.
Names can deceive.

1841:
Summoned by the Salish for reasons convoluted,
three Blackrobes passed through the land we now call Missoula,
home to Salish, Blackfeet, Pond' Oreilles,
All the same in the Jesuits' minds.

They marched to the Bitterroot to save men's souls--
primitive, heathen Indians.
Judged and found unworthy,
These people of the wretched earth,
slaves to the body, strangers to the mind,
must become enlightened,
Schooled. We must
kill the Indian to save the man.
If he resists,
Massacre is not out of the question.
This is America, after all.
Land of the free, home of the brave.
Progress and Christian values cannot be impeded.
We will build a church, named for the virgin mother.
This place will mark the blessed spread of civilization
to the people of these Rocky Mountains.

1891:
Father Diomedi, first priest of St. Francis, "sows in whirlwinds and reaps in tornadoes"-- from a sign in front of St Francis Cathedral, Missoula, Montana, 2011.

Progress marches, victorious, into Missoula.
Transforming wretched earth to a heavenly realm,
Warmth blocks out bitter cold.
In celebration, forced from their Bitterroot homelands,
U.S. troops march Salish men, women, children
Across Higgins Avenue Bridge,

Onto a reservation,
Where the St. Ignatius Mission lay in wait.
Inside, St. George slays dragons with human faces,
Portending terrors to come.

2011:

"The dragon's face should be Mother Loyola," --Francis "Franny" Burke, quoted in the Missoulian,
May, 2011

Stolen names, tongues, stories.
"Dirty pigs.
Dumb Indians."
Abuse, verbal, physical, sexual,
Thousands, hidden away.

One man's story, one tribe's,
Repeat.
Denominations randomly assigned.
Trauma, shame, layered
Five generations deep.

Paradise lost,
Stolen. Civilized.
"Lazy Indians. Drunks. Good for nothin'.
They're handed everything
They could ever want,"
Echo voices,
Skin glinting light, like mine.
Someone's loss is another's gain;
Privilege stained in blood.
Dragon slain. What's done is done.
Forgotten.
A question lingers:
What will become of St. George?

Al's and Vic's submitted and rejected by *Whitefish Review, Cutbank*
by Wendy Zagray Warren

Around an old Missoula campfire,
layers of story are laid down.
Tree rings,
Marking time.

A man and a woman
Sit at the bar, alone.
Their eyes, butterflies,
brush briefly, flit away.
Hired to tend this morning's fire,
a no-longer-young man chats with each.
Thin smoke rises.

He, too, is alone.

Air thick with stale remains
of last night's stories,
not yet settled
on those of regulars gone missing
Or long since dead.

Thousands of years of stories
ooze up between floorboards,
buffalo and bull trout sizzling on fire's flame,
Soft sounds of many tongues
braid together, weave through the room
where we now sit nursing our gin,
humbly adding our own thin strand.
One more ring,
a sign
that we, too, were here.

On the Banks of Bear River submitted and rejected by *Whitefish Review* and *Cutbank*
By Wendy Zagray Warren

Oh, the stones.
Two hundred and seventeen
circle below river break's steep banks.
Blackfeet stories
are told on the land.

Bear River,
a name once removed
as infamous trespassers,
renamed the world
in their own image.

Eight bodies sharing one breath
crouch at a locked gate's feet.
"No Trespassing" flaps in the wind.

Ears tuned, brains scanning,
hearts hide behind pens
as the story is told.

Smoke signals,
rising dust rattles,
young, brown man appears

nods a greeting, opens the gate.
Work to be done.
He smiles, we follow
silently.

Minds hover on the rim, but hearts descend,
pink blooms of prickly pear
lighting the steep trail.

Down,
down to the people, frozen in time,
warmed by this day's sun.

Formed of the earth, rounded by river.
Heavy Runner, leader among men, is one,
Indistinguishable.
Two hundred and sixteen
elders, women, children,
sit with him still.

Few survived,
ran, dodged, hid,
bore witness.

A story seldom told,
this is our story—yours, mine.
carefully hidden, yet held in this land.

American. Massacre.
Soldiers, driven by hate,
or following orders,

or drunk.
“One dead Indian
as good as another.”

Murder, a shape shifter,
lives among us still.
All is lost; others' gain.

Among the living here this day,
those who can, pray
in the language of the stones,

voices from the land,
carried by wind,
lifted in smoke.

Oh, the stones.
They live and breathe,
they bleed.

“Pray,” they call, “pray.”
Cool skin on warm stone,
prayers rise beyond words

for all across this land,
The fences of perpetrators remain.

When NCTE's *English Journal's* call for submissions included a theme of "Character and Characters," in January, 2012, I submitted the following poems, three of which were written as part of Creative Pulse, my University of Montana's Master's program. In the Creative Writing Apprenticeship, Randy Bomer challenged me as a writer in ways I had not been challenged before. These poems reflect that challenge, as well as mark the beginning of the process of my reflection on my journey as a teacher and as a person. In applying for and accepting the position in Education Studies at Berea, perhaps I was breaking a stereotype I had of *myself*. The poems demonstrate a spark I am coming to see in myself, perhaps especially as I age. Perhaps in the course of my graduate studies, this spark is being fanned into the flames of an educational leader.

Assignment submitted to *English Journal*, rejected
for Randy Bomer
by Wendy Zagray Warren

"Three poems," he said, grinning devilishly.
"Three poems **and** a story."
She laughed.
He continued.
She sighed,
Turned inside out.

Doubt, torrid beast,
Descended, suffocating,
Filling dark spaces
Where words hide.

Frozen.
Unwilling to submit,
She pulled out her chisel,
Carved the first word,
Studied the space around it
Molten in her mouth.

She knew she couldn't.
But she did.

Stereotype-Buster published with an article in *Montana Writing Project Journal*; submitted to *English Journal*, still in review

By Wendy Zagray Warren

Because I'm a teacher,
People expect me to look
Like an old lady—
Grey hair in a bun,
Glasses on the end of my nose,
Frail, in an old fashioned dress
Buttoned up to my neck,
High heeled shoes.

I resist that image
With all of my might.
Yes, my silver hair shines,
But I'm strong.
I dress for comfort—
Colored jeans,
Flat comfortable shoes.
I need to be able to run fast
And jump high
Because sometimes teachers
Really are super-heroes
(Shhh....don't tell....)

Because I'm a teacher,
People expect me to be stern,
Never have any fun,
"To keep those kids in line,
People say,
"Don't smile 'till Christmas,"

Are they crazy?
If we didn't laugh together,
We wouldn't become family,
Share stories of our lives,
Laugh together,
Live together.

Because I'm a teacher,
People expect me to carry
A textbook and a pointer,
Ready to slam it on their desk
When my boring lessons
Put them to sleep.
I should drone on and on
About things nobody cares about.
I should make all the decisions.
My students should never think very hard
Or speak for themselves,

Or write the truth about their lives,
Or the fantasy that may allow them to
Make the world a better place.

But come and visit my room
And you'll hear the sounds of kids talking—
Choosing what they want to say,
Not always agreeing
But listening,
Learning from each other,
Making this classroom a safe place
For each of us to become.

You'll see kids writing,
Sharing their truth,
Talking back to stereotypes,
Claiming their rights
As humans and as writers.
Using the power of words
To find their place in the world,
Testing actions and consequences
In fiction
Letting their characters take the rap
For what they wouldn't or couldn't do.
Trying to find the message
They were meant to share.

Our students have important stories to tell
About the kind of place
The world will be
And we'd better listen
Because the future really is
In their hands.

Joy submitted to *English Journal*, still in review
by Wendy Zagray Warren

The rope
Swishes on pavement,
Clash, Clash,
Hisses as it arcs.

My body relaxes
To the rhythm of the rope.
Clish, clish.

Raising my hands to follow,
Catch its rhythm for the first time
In forty years,
At just the right time,

I jump in.

..And I am ten,
In the neighborhood with my friends,
Jumping to the rhythm
Of the rope,
Remembering its rhymes
Remembering joy,
Remembering to play.

What You See submitted to *English Journal*, still in review

A tiny girl stretched long, with
Homemade jumper, missing tooth, flip flops flapping,
She swirls and dances,
Giggling as she grows dizzy, falls,
Stretches, breathes,
Feels the grass cool and damp on her back,
She floats away in clouds and conquers the world.

Nearby,
A woman, stretched long, smiles,
Greets her students as they bump past, rolling their eyes.
Bright thrift store shirt from Guatemala hangs on her ladder of ribs,
Silver hair, silent, sensible shoes,
She checks her watch, hears a bell,
Walks a long, carefully neutral hallway,
Mind consumed.

The song of the tiny girl, stretched long,
Still bounces and twirls inside her silver mind,
Escapes through her eyes,
Still conquers the world.

Success

In late January, I received word that *two* of my three chapter proposals for *The Poor are Not the Problem* had been accepted. I was thrilled, flattered—and a bit daunted at the prospect. *Two* chapters? For Paul Gorski? And Julie Landsman? The person who had been keynote speaker at the most recent National Writing Project conference focused on diversity? In their email to me, the editors were apologetic they hadn't accepted the third proposal as well. Frankly, I was relieved. I was not quite sure how I would find the time to draft and revise two chapters to

the standard I would expect of myself to submit to Paul Gorski, one of my heroes in the field of teaching for social justice.

The two proposals accepted were the most personal. One, the first piece included in this project, “What’s a Middle Class White Girl Doing in a Reflective Place Like This?” is about the trajectory of my own growth in the area of social and racial identity and its impact on my teaching. The other, titled “Words as Weapons: Dehumanization as a Social Norm in Schools,” focuses on how and why I teach about issues of poverty in my seventh grade classroom.

As I read the manuscript guidelines, I saw that the chapters would be relatively short: fifteen pages or less. I strengthened my resolve and set to work, knowing now without a doubt that the article about teaching performance poetry would fall by the wayside. All indicators had steered me in this direction instead—toward a book that meshes perfectly with the mission of Berea College. Indeed, this was the perfect time for me to closely consider the implications of the growing divide between rich and poor in our nation and to consider the role of public education in helping students, our future leaders, to also consider that divide.

Meanwhile, I had selected and revised three more poems to send to *Whitefish Review*, when I saw that the next issue was to be titled and themed “The Wild Issue.” Unfortunately, the poems I had been working on wouldn’t fit the theme. Reviewing the many drafts of poems I have written over the past few years, I selected three poems that might work and began to revise, readying them for submission to this “The Wild Issue” in March, 2012. Not having received any such encouragement from editors of the *Whitefish Review* to submit more poems, I hoped I wouldn’t hear a sigh reverberate across the Flathead Valley as they received another batch of my poems. I’m coming to think of the imagined anticipation of an editor’s reaction as part of the agony and the ecstasy of writing for publication.

Early June Morning submitted to *Whitefish Review*, rejected
by Wendy Z. Warren

Eerily glowing embers
Seep into the corners
Of a pre-dawn sky
As if flames crackle
Beneath the horizon.

Air sparks and sputters
Loons flee--
Their frantic shouts crescendo
Then fade into the distance.

A single splash
A deer, swims silently, urgently,
Thrashes onto the opposite shore.
Disappears.

My muscles tighten,
Fear transferred
In this uncertain dawn.

Waiting, watching,
The sky brightens,
Embers slowly cool
As morning's calm returns.

Diamond Dust: All That Glitters submitted to *Whitefish Review*, rejected
by Wendy Zagray Warren

In the bedroom of a Louisiana plantation house
lives a mirror dusted with diamonds.

I carry a scar, our tour guide says,
A recent accident
From which I have not yet recovered.

Barely visible to we
strangers,
she freely shares her shame.

Sometimes, she says, sometimes
When I'm feeling bad

I come and gaze into this mirror—
the only place I still sparkle.

Clarinets wail,
feathered masks,
voices
rising from African drumbeats
echo through Congo Park.

Shivering, sparkling,
the city rises,
bracing painfully on one elbow.
Forcing a smile,
she hesitates,
inhales,
gathers the breath needed
to once again sing the diamond dust
to life.

Anyone sitting here? she asks,
hair slicked,
dark skin shining,
her smile a keyboard of flats and sharps.
Are you from here? she asks. No?
Well, welcome to New Orleans.
She clasps my hand.
I've lived here 52 years.

They let me sit here, most days,
When chairs are free.
They play jazz every day at 3.

She sits.
In and around the music
we talk, sing, clap, rejoice.
Miss Dorothy and I,
stirring up dust
as, for a few moments,
we fly away.

After, she asks if I know
about delusions,
shows me pills,

speaks of Katrina,
parents drowned,
too weak to swim.

But she,
she swam away,
and now all the dust of life's diamonds
sparkle only in her mind.

Life in Four Directions submitted to *Whitefish Review*, rejected
by Wendy Zagray Warren

Low angled sun
speaks its genesis over Lion Mountain,
glancing the surface of ebony water.
Tamarack needles gather,
glint gold,
circle,
rising and falling
with each breath.

Water thickens to mercury,
preparing for difficult seasons to come.
Staring into these hematite depths
I hope, perhaps, to find my future.

Instead, I am distracted.
Images dance on the surface,
dried reeds echo water's rhythm.
Golden Eyes fish in a rippling, iridescent forest
of white-barked Birch,
golden Larch,
Ponderosa jade.
Thirsty dogs' disturbance
spirals outward,
fractures branches,
Ducks scramble and soar
Away---

Filtered light diffuses,
a vague memory
as the sun
climbs toward noon
Flittering light
dances through frozen air.

Once roiling magma stills
As I watch,
Each wave
A gentle drumbeat,
Lapping over the one before,
Until they still,
Frozen.

.
Fresh footprints
on solid water
offer new perspective.
This path is not mine alone.
Tracks of predecessors are recorded in time,
As I begin again to learn the world.

Voles
circle and play
on their long journey
across the lake,

Sharp, thin hooves of deer
Leave their marks

Occasionally, a conquest--
feathers of fur encased in ice,
clean rib cage,
jaw bone,
wing beats of eagle and raven,
blood stained predators' tracks
dance in
celebration.

Warm light
glances below thick clouds
just above the horizon,
as sun continues her journey,
a time for walking.
The drumbeat returns,
drip, drip, drip.
Snow fleas dance in footprints,
Snow spirals to the base of each hill.
The brittle beat of my steps
Muted now by softened soil.

A flash of gold

before green settles in to stay,
birthplace of
Glacier Lilies, Spring Beauties, Calypso Orchids.
breathing rich, moist, earth.

At day's end,
Grey Jays, Nuthatches, Bald Eagles sound nesting calls.
Eggs tucked away in tree trunks, branches, fields,
bask in body warmth.
Mountain grouse drum mating songs on hollow logs,
Robins sing
honor songs to the sun

as darkness descends.
Day's heat dissipates,
a fire glows
at lake's edge.

Sparks
leap into darkness,
rising,
transforming—

meteorites
soar, joining
millions,
lighting the sky trail,
Pulsing a steady beat--
The rhythm of the earth,
The rhythm of my heart
And I sleep.

Berea College: Resilience

At the end of February, I traveled to Berea College for an interview. In early March, I signed a contract as an Instructor of Education Studies. Bobby Starnes, my first teaching mentor, is now Chair of Education Studies at Berea, and will once again become my teacher. In the fall, I will begin work on an EdD. I am proud that at the time of my application for both opportunities, my CV included these many works in progress along with the book chapters that had been accepted for publication.

During the short time I was at Berea for my interview, I also had an unexpected opportunity. I met Paul Gorski, one of the two editors of the book for which my chapter proposals were accepted. Gorski lives and works in Washington, D.C., but he, Bobby Starnes and Althea Webb, a faculty member of Berea's Education Studies, had just begun a research project together focused on the resilience of Berea's students. Resilience is one of the themes that have fascinated me, both in Holocaust scholarship and in Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's research on generational trauma and resilience of Native peoples in the U.S., resurging after decades of federal policy focused on eliminating the people, their languages and cultures. To my great joy, I have been invited to join Starnes, Gorski and Webb in their research.

A bit suspicious about their connection, I asked Bobby if she had told Paul Gorski that she knew me. She said that she hadn't, until it looked like we would meet in Berea. When she did tell him of our relationship, just before my interview, he recognized my name, and told her that I had submitted some great chapter proposals. Little did I know these book chapters I will write for *The Poor Are Not the Problem* will be the first of what I hope will be a long working relationship with Paul Gorski. Little did I know that soon I will be working with *two* of my mentors and teaching heroes.

The writing that follows focuses on poverty, an issue I am thinking about often as I anticipate my move to Berea College. The first poem was written a few years ago after a visit to New York City and has been revised many times. The monologue was written during last year's Creative Pulse writing apprenticeship, and the manuscript is the second chapter I have ready to submit for Gorski and Landsman's book. The focus of that chapter involves my teaching, sharing the story of how and why I raise issues of class and focus on poverty in particular, in my seventh grade classroom.

In a Strange Land unpublished, revised
By Wendy Zagray Warren

She
held out her hand,

said, "please...
please."

I gasped,
passing.

She, concealed,
swaddled in blue,
but for one dark hand.

I pictured children
tucked safely away,
cement walls rising around them,
shivering,
waiting.

I, swept along
in a flock of strangers,
cautioned, fearful,

heard her voice echo.

"Please..."

Finally...
I stopped.

Money
even harder
to reach

than my heart.

Finding both,

I walked back,

alone

seeking

that corner
that blue moment

where the lives of two women
touched

and I flinched,

And looked away.

The Dump: A Monologue unpublished
by Wendy Zagray Warren

Hey...Hey you! Yeah, you—No, don't look away! Look here. Look at me. I'm the one sitting in the used-to-be-yellow Ford you always see parked by the dumpster. The one you think is a rust bucket. The tool of my trade. Don't tell me you haven't noticed. It's here almost every time you come in. I've seen you glance over—seen that look in your eye before you quickly look away, trying not to see. It's not the truck you don't wanna' see. It's me. You know why I'm here. I'm makin' my way in the world. Just like you.

You wouldn't believe what I find. Shit, why do they bring it here? Don't they know there are people who need this stuff? But the dump is where it is, so the dump is where I come to get it.

Look over here. No--look into my eyes. See *me*. I'm that person who was sitting in your classroom fifteen years ago. I'm your great-aunt, your neighbor, your son. You wanna know something really scary? I'm *you*. Wanna know about me? Hell, I don't care if ya' don't. Life is just a matter of luck, ya' know. All a' mine bad. Most a' yours good, from the looks of it.

Do ya know they're trying to kick us outta here? Pass a law or some shit like that, says we can't be here? Why is that? We're not hurtin' nothing.' We're recyclin'. Isn't that what you taught us in school? We should recycle. It's not about that—can't be. Know what I think it is? It's this. *You* don't want to see *us*. You don't want to know people like me exist. It's like you're two years old, ya' know? If *you* close *your* eyes, you can make *me* go away. Then you don't even have to know I'm alive—that I'm human—that American has come to this.

What? Leaving so soon? You just got here.

Me? I'm staying. Look at this SUV comin' in. Loaded. I'm ready.

Words Used as Weapons: Dehumanization as a Social Norm in Schools

submitted (proposal accepted) for *The Poor are not the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsmann
by Wendy Zagray Warren

Words as Weapons

When I read *Warriors Don't Cry*, a book by Melba Patillo Beals, one of the nine courageous black students who integrated Little Rock High School, I tell my seventh grade students that I will read the word “nigger” aloud as many times as it is used in the text. The reason for this, I say, is that I want them to see that words are sometimes used as weapons. That is how, in fact, this word has been used most often. The first few times the word appears, I point to the punch, and soon it is clear to them that this word, along with many other kinds of emotional and physical violence, is used in an attempt to dehumanize these nine students over and over again. My students gain new insight into a question they

had asked earlier in the year, the question all teachers get when discussing the use of this particularly loaded term: “How come *they* can use that word with each other, but *we* can’t use it with *them*? As they learn this bit of history, descending the stairway with Melba at the very moment a fiery object hurls past her head, just missing her, these young students begin to understand that this issue is about power—who has it and why, who doesn’t and why—and, although they wouldn’t say it this way, how words can be used to keep social hierarchies in place.

Over the course of the year, in my language arts classes we have studied a series of events in Nazi Germany leading up to the Holocaust. We have examined the Pyramid of Hate (ADL 2012), depicting the ascending scale of dehumanization. Not wanting to leave that discussion focused only on events in Europe, with *those* people, over *there*, I turn the lens to focus on the U.S. and the attempts, both personal and institutional, to dehumanize peoples of color throughout most of the short history of this nation. This includes acknowledging that our school, like all schools in this nation, now stands where it does because indigenous peoples were killed or forced from homelands and ways of life while attempts were made to “help” them “assimilate” into Western culture (Fleming 2003, Nabakov 1999).

Students in my classes, through writing and conversation, wrestle with the human capacity for love and for hate. It seems crucial, in this study, that we make connections between past and present. It is all too tempting to leave these events attributed to *those* people in the past. We’re human. When difficult topics emerge, we want an escape hatch.

One day, attempting to build a bridge past and present, I spontaneously asked, “So, would you say anyone is dehumanized at our school?”

A chorus of ‘yeses’ flooded the room.

Somewhat surprised at the speed of my students’ responses, I continued. “Okay, who?”

What happened next floored me. A list came rapid fire, without hesitation, and seemingly without shame. “Mexicans. Asians. Indians. African Americans. Jews. People with brown skin. People who are hurt and in a cast, or disabled. People with tattoos or piercings. People who drive old cars. Teachers. People who wear ratty clothes. People who are fat...or skinny. Environmentalists. Hobos. People with different politics than you...”

The list went on until it filled a page. As the conversation continued, I tried to hide my shock. I hadn’t heard this abuse in our hallways; students’ conscious’s obviously bother them enough that they hide this intimidation from the watchful eye of teachers. Yet on this day, with no more than a nudge, these assaults came pouring out into the daylight of the classroom.

There are few Asian, Hispanic or Jewish people at our school, and yet derogatory terms for these peoples appeared on the list. Clearly, students are influenced by what they hear in the wider culture. Equally clear is that this name-calling has been here, under the surface, all along; I just haven’t thought to ask. The word “hobo” appeared on the list, but I didn’t immediately differentiate it from the other words. The entire list seemed rooted in a mire largely precipitated by educational lack—of historical background, of an understanding of current events, of examination of self and society—here within these schoolhouse walls.

Teaching Against Dehumanization: Breaking Stereotypes

A few days later a student used the word “hobo” again, disparagingly, as a casual descriptor, in the midst of a class discussion. This time, it grabbed my attention. Unlike the other labels, there appears to be no

taboo in the use of this word. I ask questions, try to understand its meaning in my collective students' minds. To them, it seems, "hobo" is synonymous with a person who is homeless. The connotation is negative—a "hobo" is a person to be feared as well as scorned. As my students talk, I realize I have some serious thinking to do about how to address this misconception, and the associated fear. It seems to begin with stereotypes my students have around issues of poverty, which transfers to scorn for individuals who are homeless. They have been demonized. They are suddenly, somehow, the "bad guys".

In class, we have discussed stereotyping at length already, examined how it is used in propaganda, so we have a common language with which we might begin to unpack this issue. What puzzles me most is the fact that this is a community where many people *are* poor. Sitting in that classroom, perhaps even leading the discussion, are students perpetuating a stereotype that might easily be used to describe them. Also in the room are a few students whose families are at the complete opposite end of the financial spectrum—who are delivered to school in Humvees.

As a teacher, I have a choice about whether to ignore or address this issue. My language arts curriculum involves the building of skills; I am free to choose the content to embed with the teaching of those skills (Elser, 2010). Rather than swerve around this lack of compassion based on misunderstanding, I choose to face it head on—to teach in a way that asks students to think deeply about issues of poverty. Not knowing exactly where the flow of activities I tentatively plan might lead us, I come to class the next day carrying the illustrated book *Fly Away Home*, by Eve Bunting. I read it aloud, trusting it will create an entry point for discussion. The book's main characters, a six-year old boy and his father, live in an airport. They try not to be noticed. They dress carefully, all in blue—jeans, shirts and jackets. They keep a list so they are sure to rotate which terminal they sleep in each night. Partway through the story, the boy's father boards a bus for his daily commute to work. The boy is cared for by another family also living in the airport, who also have a son. The two boys have a conversation about home, vowing that whoever gets one first will invite the other's family to come and live there, too. The sting of these boys spending their days watching people de-board planes, hugging the loved ones who have come to drive them *home*, is palpable.

After reading the story aloud, I ask my students what stereotypes were broken for them. They like the characters; they don't find them at all scary. They notice that both characters work—the tiny boy helps people carry their luggage, when they let him, the father works as a janitor. I ask my students if it is possible for people to work and still not be able to afford rent or a house payment. They silently nod yes. I imagine most have at least some experience with this struggle, either personally or involving someone they know. I ask students why someone might become homeless. They begin with the boy in the book, who shares that his mother had died. We don't know more than that, but we talk about medical expenses and other kinds of debts that might unexpectedly put someone in a financial position where they fall into poverty. Students bring up unemployment as well. Some of their fathers are away, working in oil fields on the Montana/Wyoming border or in Alaska—anyplace they can find a job. During our weekly sharing time called "Freedom to Speak", you can hear the excitement in their voices on the rare weekends when they say their fathers are coming home for a visit.

I ask my students what poverty is. They look puzzled for a minute, so we begin talking about basic needs, food, water and shelter. We agree on a rudimentary definition of poverty as someone not being able to meet these basic needs on a regular basis.

"Do you suppose there are people in our school whose families fit this definition of poverty?"

A few nod knowingly—and others look at them, surprised. If an experience has never been your own, it's easy not to see it even exists.

At this point, we return to the word “hobo...” and the stereotypes and judgments it sounds like my students are making when they refer to people who are homeless in that way.

I ask, “What do you really know about someone who is homeless or poor?”

Even after the conversation we’ve just had, some cling to the standard line of defense that has become a cultural narrative: “They’re lazy. They want to be homeless.” I cringe, sure there are students in the room whose parents are struggling to maintain a home. They, however, remain silent.

“How do you know?” I ask.

“Because they don’t have a job.”

“When a person doesn’t have a job, do you know that they’re lazy, or might there be other reasons?” A few students bring up some of the reasons we had just discussed. It’s interesting how fast those truths fly out of people’s minds when the cultural narrative enters the room. I’m thinking, too, of racism—in the present and its historic impact on people’s lives today—but I know we’re not yet ready to complicate this conversation. For now, I stick with the storyline in *Fly Away Home*. It allows us the distance necessary to have this conversation that for some is so personal.

“In *Fly Away Home*, did the boy’s dad have a job?”

“Yea, but...hmmmm....”

I ask again, “What do you really know about someone who is homeless?”

“They don’t have a home!” a boy yells out, with a smirk. He looks surprised when I pick up on that.

“Yep, that’s all I know for sure, too...I don’t *know* anything else.” And for this day, we leave it at that.

Working for Change

The following class period, we watch a short video on You Tube called “Change for a Dollar.” I have three “writing to think” questions written on the board, for students to respond to after watching the video: *How does this make you feel? What does it make you think about? What does it make you want to do?*

The video opens with a man, dressed in a way that fits a stereotype, sitting on a city street, holding a sign that says, “Change?” Some of the passersby give him change. Then we watch what he does with that change, paying it forward to a few different people, whose stories we see enough of to know they are also in need. When the video ends, students write, silently processing what they have seen.

Before any discussion, I play another person’s story, one I heard on NPR’s Story Corp one morning while driving to school. In “Homeless at 60: A Bullet I Didn’t See Coming,” a woman tells speaks of an unexpected layoff from a job that had always been stable, working in a government office. She was just a few years away from retirement. The woman is African-American, and I don’t show her picture when I first play the story. This is an opportunity to break another stereotype for my students. This woman goes on to say that she never thought she would find herself asking for money in the street, but she did—in order to buy her daughter a birthday card.

We begin talking about people's stories—how you never really know just by looking what is happening in another person's life. It is easy for people dehumanize others. I want my students to realize that our reactions are choices. When we see someone asking for money in the street, we each have to make a decision about how we will act.

After a short discussion, I collect what my students have written. Later, I read, once again amazed by these twelve turning thirteen year olds, thinking about their world:

"I think of homeless really different (sic.). [Sometimes] the homeless only wanted money for liquor. But everybody's not all the same. If you give change, you'll get change. People will think of you as a good person. Not someone who'll spend the money on liquor or drugs. Like I said, I think of some homeless as kind people. Not all, though."

"A stereotype is all homeless people are mean and wouldn't put other people's feelings before their own."

"This makes me want to help donate and give. This also broke a stereotype I had about homeless people. I thought they were greedy and selfish, but this shows they can be kind and giving. It also makes me sad to see how kind he is, yet so poor."

"Just because homeless people may look scary or angry doesn't mean they aren't sensitive and selfless. Just because homeless people may not have jobs or homes that doesn't mean they can't make a "change." Homeless people can make a change, even if they don't have it."

"I feel that giving something small can change someone's life significantly. I feel empathy for him."

"I would have never thought that a penny could change so much of a person's life and it makes me think of the hard times I know a lot of families are going through right now and they are making some change just to scrape along."

"It makes me realize that everyone has a story, homeless people too."

Reading these lines, I can almost hear the sound of stereotypes shattering.

Understanding Inequality

I reinforce with my students over and over that they are the hope for the future; that each of them will have to make decisions about complicated issues throughout their lifetimes as they become the nation's leaders. Building this hope is one of the reasons I am a teacher.

After all of our talk of poverty in previous class periods, we begin the next class by writing to think about wealth. "We've talked about some of the reasons some people in our country might become poor," I say. "What about the opposite? Why might some people be wealthy?"

After writing, we share our thoughts. I try to push my students' thinking with my questions...probing what they may or may not know about inherited wealth. I remind them of a book I had read aloud earlier in the year, *Crossing Bok Chitto*, by Tim Tingle, in which they saw the contrast between a slave owner's mansion and the tiny wooden cabins built to house slaves. I asked if they thought the plantation owner might have wealth to pass on to his children. They all thought he surely would. I asked if the slaves would likely have money to pass on to their children. The answer was obvious, and the point quickly made.

One student talked about entrepreneurs; I was interested that he knew that word. He assumed that innovative inventions would automatically make a person wealthy. This led to a short conversation about start-up costs, investors, and who might be more likely to be able to find investors based on their social circles. This conversation can get complicated quickly.

Rather than getting lost in talk, we move on to an activity called “The Ten Chairs,” intended to illustrate the distribution of wealth in our country. Ten chairs are set up in the front of the room. I ask for ten volunteers to sit in the chairs. Students are eager to participate, so I turn to the set of index cards I use during class discussions—to be sure everyone has an equal opportunity. Each student’s name is written on a card, so I draw names randomly. Ten of the students who choose to participate run to the chairs and sit down. Now the lesson can begin.

“Each chair represents ten percent of all the wealth in our country,” I begin. Each one of *you* represents ten percent of the country’s population. If our nation’s wealth was distributed equally—so that everyone has the same amount, this is what it would look like: one person in each chair; ten percent of the population has ten percent of the wealth.”

“Is our nation’s wealth distributed equally?” I ask. Heads shake.

“This activity is a way to illustrate what the distribution of wealth really looks like.”

I choose one of the students to represent ten percent of the wealthiest people in the U.S.

“How much of the nation’s wealth do you think ten percent of the richest of people hold?” I ask. “In other words, how many chairs do you think will belong to Ann?”

Students call out numbers, almost without thinking, and then I give them the number. Ann has to lie down, arms extended, in order to stretch herself out over *seven* of the chairs.

“What does that mean for the other ninety percent of Americans? Where do they go?” I ask, and the remaining students look at the three chairs that are left, and then at each other. “Yep,” I say. Find a way to make that happen.”

After a few minutes of negotiating how they might all pile on top of each other to all fit onto the three chairs, whining and complaining all the while, I have everyone return to their seats. The point is mad—so far. But I also want them to consider the figures for the top one percent, so I ask Ann to stay at the front.

“Now,” I say, “Ann’s *arm* represents the top one percent of the wealthiest people in our nation. How much of the wealth do you think just Ann’s arm might have?”

Again students guess. After a few moments, I say that Ann’s arm alone will have to cover more than three, and almost four chairs. Students gasp as they watch her try to stretch her arm that far.

While my seventh graders have a hard time grasping the notion of what a small percentage of the population one percent is, or how unlikely it is that they might someday be *in* the top one percent, they at least come away with an understanding that wealth in our country is distributed quite unevenly.

To push this thinking a bit further and to practice an important skill, I project charts and graphs that give more information about wealth and poverty in the U.S. I create bar graphs that graphically illustrate poverty rates for White, Black, Latino, and Native American peoples. I think the conversation might begin with stereotypes when I ask possible reasons for the differences, but I’m instead surprised when my

students can't come up with an answer other than racism. I ask them to say more—to explain how racism might affect income. They said things like: “You wouldn't get hired for a job”, or “You might be the first laid off if you have a racist boss.” When I explain that it is illegal to discriminate in that way, my students have no trouble at all explaining ways employers might get around anti-discrimination laws.

When I say, “Do you mean that racism still exists?” all heads nod vigorously. They see and hear racism around them every day, they explain. Now they are recognizing some of its ramifications. We talk again briefly about inherited wealth—how the results of many years of institutionalized racism can still be seen today. While not fully understanding the many dimensions of racism, it is clear even to these seventh graders that they do not live in a “post-racial society.”

Pushing just a bit farther, I aim for another stereotype, one I hear frequently bantered around the political arena. I project a pie graph showing the distribution of people on welfare. It is obvious in a second that more people with white skin than with black skin receive the benefit of welfare in our country. Yet the stereotype of the “welfare queen” remains a single, black mother.

When students ask how welfare is paid for, some of them grin in triumph when I say, “taxes.” Many of my students think they know the evils of taxes. In fact, it was one of the reasons they gave when I asked how people might become poor. They didn't know that the tax system is based on the amount of money a person makes. I work hard to stick to facts in this conversation, and that proves to be easy. My students have no idea how tax money is used. Looking at several pie graphs from disparate sources on the web, I explain that a large portion of tax dollars goes to the military. The rest is used for infrastructure like roads and railroad tracks, for example, money for public schooling, and health and welfare, including Social Security. I talk briefly about social service programs—Aid to Dependent Children, Food Stamps, etc. I talk about when and why the welfare system was put into place in our country. Clearly, these students have never heard this before. Many times during this conversation I repeat that every person needs to reach their own conclusions about what they think about this information. We, as a nation have important questions before us. Do citizens of our country have some responsibility to each other, or would it be best if every person just took care of themselves?

Later that day, I check in with Trent, a student who I'd noticed had suddenly grown distant in class during these discussions of wealth and poverty. When I share this observation with him and ask how he is doing, he says, “Yea....I hear so much about these issues at home from my dad. And it usually involves yelling.” From what I've heard many students say, I assume the yelling revolves around the stereotype about “the poor” being too lazy to work—and it's the tax dollars of hard-working people being used to support them.

It seems perhaps the thinking of some of my students has shifted a bit as we've talked about issues like inherited wealth; they clearly recognize the prejudice that they see around them, and now seem to be coming to an understanding that the playing field is not even for everyone. I can only imagine how this must throw Trent and many other students into disequilibrium as he wrestles with what he hears from his dad and his own evolving thoughts about this new information. Cognitive dissonance is not easy, but it is the place where deep learning begins.

What is Wealth?

I don't want to leave this discussion of wealth and poverty without varying the perspective a bit. Once again, by begin class by asking my students to free write. These are the questions that get their thinking started: *How do you know if someone is wealthy? What are different ways people show their wealth? How do you think about wealth? Does it have to do only with money, or do you think people can be “rich” in other ways? Explain your thinking.*

After students write, I move right on to another book which I will read aloud. *The Table Where Rich People Sit*, by Byrd Baylor is a story about a girl frustrated by her family's apparent lack of wealth. She calls a family meeting to talk about money. She chastises her parents for not caring enough about it. Her parents suggest that while they talk, she should keep a running list of family wealth. The discussion then turns to listing all the things they value most in life. In order to appease their daughter, they attach an imagined monetary value to each of the things they list, most of the abstract. Through this exercise, the daughter comes to know a different way to measure wealth.

After reading, we talk, starting with the ways in which rich people might show their wealth. "How do you know if someone is rich?" I ask. Images of huge houses and expensive vehicles come to my students' minds first. It makes sense. Despite the poverty in the area, we also see plenty of examples of ways in which wealth is flaunted.

I ask if there might be people who decide to use their wealth in other way—ways in which we might not know they are wealthy. My students talk about charitable giving, but they know this usually comes only after the purchase of the fancy houses and cars.

I ask if they've ever heard about potlatches and giveaways—traditions of some of the indigenous peoples of this land who traditionally have a different way of measuring wealth. A few have...those for whom it might be part of their lived experience.

"In some cultures." I say, "rather than how much you *own*, wealth is measured by how much a person gives away. I briefly explain the notion of a potlatch, and the fact that, interestingly, the U.S. government banned potlatches and giveaways for much of our nation's history (Fleming 192). I leave them with another burning question: "Why do you think that might be?"

Be the Change

Years ago, a Blackfeet colleague taught me that asking questions—and sometimes just leaving them suspended in the air—might be one way to encourage people to think deeply about their values—to recognize their own cultural perspective. With my questions, I hope to challenge my students to think critically, probing what they see around them, learning to look for perspectives other than their own. I hope they will be thoughtful—open and accepting—about the many ways there are to be human, practicing humanity rather than the dehumanization they too often see around them. I hope my students will be aware that their actions are driven by their choices, that they truly can "be the change" they want to see in the world. I hope they will choose to use words to build bridges rather than shoot people down.

I have to be realistic, though, and patient with the incremental pace of change. As we stand together near the student lockers, one of my students says, out of the blue: "Ms. Warren, I *am* trailer trash. I live in a trailer."

I suck in my breath and carefully respond. "Casey, in my way of thinking, *no* human being can be trash." I make a mental note to address that particular slur the next class period.

I don't even have a chance to raise the question, though, because Casey does. Early the next class period, he loudly proclaims, as if the question had been asked, "Yes, I live in a trailer, but I am *not* trailer trash, and neither are most of the people in my trailer park." I smile, buoyed by his courage. Then he continues. "In fact, there's only one person in my whole trailer park who is."

Oh, dear. I smile, knowing these young people are navigating the complexities of their worlds in the best ways they can. Changes in their thinking won't happen in a day, or a year. My hope, as a teacher, is to

nudge them into imagining the kind of world they'd like to see, and the kind of human they'd like to be. I will likely never see the growth of the seeds that may be planted in these seventh graders. I can only hope they may someday use their words to till new soil, readying it for planting, and that I may one day live in a nation made more humane through their actions.

The Creative Pulse, Pulsing

Last year, during the first week of the Creative Pulse, the words Taylor Mali spoke went straight to my heart, as if they were intended for me. This summer, during the same week, words written by Rollo May in 1975 in a book called *The Courage to Create* had a similar effect. The context for the reading was Randy Bolton's course on leadership. One of his handouts listed characteristics of effective leaders. I recognize that I have been a teacher-leader within my school district, but becoming a professor presents me with a different type of leadership role. The responsibility weighs heavily. The numbers of children my influence will touch through my work with pre-service teachers will increase exponentially. As I read "The Courage to Create," the first essay which carries the title of Rollo May's collection, I felt a rage—a fire—burning all the way down to my toes. As a result, I wrote these "truths," based on Rollo May's words, and shared them during our first week's personal performances—an experience where we are asked to take action on a personal issue. Speaking these truths, with conviction, was one of my actions.

Truths

*Everything shared during personal performances mirrors each person's place on the hero's journey. Each of our students experiences this same type of journey. It is crucial that we recognize this fact.

*We teach who we are on every part of our hero's journey.

*Teaching is an Art—a creative act. Rollo May helped me understand that in a new way.

*Teaching with integrity is an act of courage.

*Teaching is my rage against injustice. I have been called to keep hold of that fire, to share the fiery torch for a time, ultimately passing it on to the new young teachers with whom I will work.

*The saint and the rebel have often been the same person (May, 35).

*We, teachers/rebels/saints, are helping to form the structure of the new world. *This* is creative courage.

The Journey Continues

Soon I will move on to my next adventure, still focused on my life's calling of teaching and learning. College students in Kentucky will take the place of Montana seventh graders in the seats around my classroom table.

The strands of my life that have braided themselves together will continue to guide me. I will teach classes and supervise student teachers, helping them learn and find ways to teach about perspective taking, carefully considering each cut in the prism. In that way, they might stay focused on the larger purpose of education, realizing that we teachers can and must teach for humanity, working toward the country we'd like to see seven generations from now, a country that holds justice as its highest ideal in practice rather than simply as a pledge.

I will join a research team focused on studying resilience—learning through studying Berea students' own written reflections about their insights into how they have been able to come through difficult circumstances and remain strong. If these soon-to-be-teachers can identify their own sources of resilience, they will more likely be able to recognize and nurture similar qualities in their students, yet another way they might consciously teach for humanity.

In the fall, I will begin work toward an EdD in Educational Leadership with a focus in Technology at Morehead State University. The Creative Pulse course "Technology and the Arts" has convinced me of the necessity to do my best to keep up with the ever changing world of digital technology. After all, isn't much of life about adapting to change? We may try to push it out of our day to day thinking, but we all know that our lives can change in an instant. It seems that, at least partly because of the digital world they grow up in, our children may be much more flexible and ready to adapt to change than we are. As professor Rick Hughes says, if we try to ignore the technological world we live in, we won't be prepared; our students will not have

guides. A note I wrote during this class says, “I have to take my teaching into another world, because it’s the only way it will survive. This is the world that is. And I’d better get a handle on it, because I still need to teach for humanity—maybe even more so. What Rick said about his creation of musical compositions is true of teaching, as well. The artistry is the same; the tool sets are different, and have expanded dramatically.” So, like all teachers, I have a choice. I can face this change with fear and hesitation, or I can dive right in. At the moment, I’m poised on the end of the diving board. This EdD program will push me into the depths, where I’ll learn a new swimming stroke, just as I did in the Creative Pulse. Flexing my muscles in this way feels good, and keeps my creative mind healthy.

I will also continue to write. The personal and professional self-reflection that comprises this project has been invaluable to me, revealing how the strands thread together in a learning journey that will never end. I often spend so much time looking forward; I tend to forget the value in looking back at the learning trajectory that brought me to the place I now stand, albeit just for the moment. This type of reflection, when shared, might act as a guide to others looking to take a similar stance. I plan to ask my college students to continually reflect on themselves as teachers and as learners, because, as I have discovered, it is this kind of reflection that will best inform their teaching.

With this next phase in my career, I move into a role that requires an even greater degree of creative leadership. Authors and creators Rollo May and Juno Diaz share the view that educators mold and create the world of the future. That makes the role of teacher-educators all the more crucial. Teaching is a creative act. I will have the potential to touch the lives of thousands of young people, through the ways I influence their future teachers. I must gather the courage of a teacher/rebel/saint, and encourage my students to do the same. Education is the

cornerstone of our democracy. Both democracy and public education are approaching a tipping point in our country. The issues to be considered are as complex as human interactions. The space between the words of our constitution and the actions of our government continue to widen. In the words of Parker Palmer, our country is living a divided life as it struggles with its own integrity. I will continue to teach to my vision of a national narrative of inclusion, in our schools and in our lives. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of beloved community seems far out of reach, but it needn't remain so. In the DVD *Starting Small*, Vivian Gussin Paley says the classroom can be seen as a microcosm of our national community. Therefore, the classroom is the place we can practice what we'd like to see in the wider world. It is, in fact, where we must begin. Working toward that vision will remain the focus of my teaching and my life.

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Appendix A
Timeline of submissions for Publication, 2011-2012

Multi-Genre Writing for Publication Timeline 2011-2012 Wendy Zagray Warren

submitted October, 2011 *Whitefish Review* three poems *rejected* December, 2011

submitted November, 2011 *English Journal* “From the Holocaust to Civil Rights to Our School’s Hallways” for “Teacher to Teacher” themed issue “Preventing Bullying Behavior”

submitted December, 2011 *The Poor Aren’t the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*,
three chapter proposals two chapter proposals *accepted* January, 2012

submitted January, 2012 *Cutbank Literary Journal* three poems *rejected* April, 2012

submitted January, 2012 *English Journal* four poems submitted for themed issue “Character and Characters,” *rejected*

submitted March, 2012 *Whitefish Review* three poems submitted for “The Wild Issue, ”
rejected

Appendix B

Letters of Acceptance/Rejection and book chapter proposals, listed in chronological order

Submitted October, 2011 *Whitefish Review* three poems *rejected* December, 2011
St. Francis Cathedral, Missoula, Montana, 2011
Al's and Vic's
On the Banks of the Bear River

Dear Wendy Warren,

Our editorial team has taken great care in reviewing your submission. I am sorry it was not accepted for issue 10. With many hundreds of submissions and only 30 spots, the acceptance rate is very low.

Many of you have submitted several times--please continue to do so. Because of the number of submissions we can't respond individually, even if your story received many positive votes.

Please join us for the unveiling of the 10th issue of *Whitefish Review*--and our 5 year anniversary.

Saturday, the 10th of December, 2011
6:30 in the evening
BRIX- 300 Second St. East
Whitefish, Montana

Issue #10 features an interview with Tom Brokaw as he speaks about his love of the outdoors and what he learns from spending time in Montana. The fourth installment of the "conversations" series pairs up Montana's new Poet Laureate Sheryl Noethe and novelist David Allan Cates—an off-the-cuff dialogue about writing, truth, and having thick skin in the publishing world.

The evening will open with an art show, then feature Rick Bass performing fiction to the music of Stellarondo at 8 p.m. Plus, non-fiction by young author Meredith Stolte. We'll have food, beer, wine, water and lots of fun.

The event is sponsored in part by a grant from the Montana Arts Council.

Keep working and pushing your art.

Brian Schott
Founding Editor
Whitefish Review
www.whitefishreview.org
406-261-6190

Submitted November, 2011 *English Journal* “From the Holocaust to Civil Rights to Our School’s Hallways” for “Teacher to Teacher” themed issue “Preventing Bullying Behavior”

English Journal
The Journal of the Secondary Section of NCTE

Ken Lindblom, Editor
Stony Brook University
English_Journal@notes.cc.sunysb.edu

Dear Wendy Zagray Warren,

Thank you for submitting your manuscript for the “Teacher to Teacher” section of *English Journal*. I’m sorry to tell you we are not able to publish it. We received far more submissions than we are able to publish for this issue.

Thank you for your interest in *English Journal*.

Sincerely,
Ken Lindblom, Editor
English Journal

Submitted December, 2011 to *The Poor Aren't the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsman chapter proposal
rejected January, 2012

Educational Assumptions and the Opportunity Gap

Chapter Proposal (analysis and reflection on equitable practice)

Wendy Zagray Warren, 7th grade Language Arts teacher, Columbia Falls Schools,
Columbia Falls, Montana

wendyzzwarren@yahoo.com ; wendyzzw@sd6.k12.mt.us 406-253-1990

Human brains seem to operate via categorization, mental attempts to deal with new information by linking it to what we already know—or think we know. In dealing with complicated human relationships, an inherent part of teaching, this gets tricky. What we think we “know” is people who are like us. When we encounter people perceived to be “not like us,” we tend to stereotype—a form of categorization. Stereotypes are composed of assumptions, and in turn, assumptions affect our expectations. These expectations affect our behavior. All of this happens subconsciously unless something intervenes—a learning opportunity or experience—that brings it to the level of consciousness. This then, should be one goal of teacher education programs. The vast majority of pre-service teachers are White and middle class, positions often viewed as “normal” by the people who occupy them. Unexamined, these assumptions about societal norms affect expectations and therefore behavior regarding “other people’s children.”

Recently, I have called into question another educational assumption: Piaget’s developmental continuum of thought, specifically what is defined as “lower” and “higher” order thinking. My particular musings have involved assumptions around the ability to think abstractly, using symbols and metaphor. This is the kind of thinking that defines the Arts—music, visual art, dance, and poetry. It involves the origin of expression in something other than words---a leap, perhaps, from emotion to symbol. In non-Arts based classes, the assumption is often made that this is higher order thinking—the realm of the “gifted and talented.” All students might be asked to attempt this higher order thinking, but our expectation has been that ultimately, only some will be capable of this level of thought, even as adults.

But what if this assumption is wrong? This question was raised for me early in the year in my seventh grade classroom. A student labeled “learning disabled” in language development demonstrated an ability for abstract thinking that floored me. It lead me to consider the symbolic and metaphoric thinking that forms the basis of many cultural practices of peoples who are not White and European—indigenous peoples from around the world. Clearly, from a very young age, many people around the world are raised in cultures that revolve around metaphoric thought. What if these though processes we have assumed to be developmental—the realm of the intellectually gifted—is instead cultural? What if metaphoric and symbolic thinking is particularly difficult for peoples from European cultural backgrounds and not for others? After all, Piaget’s findings were based on observations of his own children, who were, of course, European. Or, to explore another avenue, what if metaphoric thought is based on a particular thinking/learning style—whole to part, say, rather than part to whole? Sylvia Ashton-Warner’s groundbreaking work with Maori students in New Zealand led, eventually, to what became known as the Whole Language movement, demonstrating that some students, at least, find more success with learning to read if they begin with whole words, whole concepts, and reading for

meaning right from the start. These differing thinking styles would likely cut across every social spectrum, including those of race and class.

With these questions in mind, I am no longer willing to make the assumption that only some students will reach these “higher” levels of thought, nor that the educational institution might be able to predict who will and who won’t.

This leads me to a point of great concern about who is labeled “gifted and talented,” or admitted to AP or advanced tracked classes. We know from decades of research that those classes are to a large extent composed of White, middle class and upper middle class students. These are the students deemed to be capable of “higher order” thought. Students in these educational tracts are sometimes identified, or, perhaps more accurately, chosen, at a very young age. They are given the opportunity to engage in “higher order thinking” based on the assumption, and therefore the expectation, that they are more capable of abstract thought.

The students “left behind,” without access to these upper tract classes, often have far fewer opportunities to practice “higher order thinking.” The assumption has been made, sometimes at a very early age, that they are not, and will never be, capable. Yet these very students often thrive when given the opportunity to engage in the arts—music, visual art, dance—all of which rely on symbolic and abstract thought.

Further, when these lower tract students, more often from non-White, middle class backgrounds, continue to struggle with the part-to-whole thinking they are so often asked to engage in, the Arts are often the first thing dropped from their curriculum in order to provide more time for them to practice the part-to-whole thinking.

These are the very students marginalized at best, ignored at worst, in our schools and in our greater society. They are the students with the most need to learn and practice resilience behaviors. Stories of people who have practiced resilience in the most dire of circumstances—survivors of genocide, for example, often emphasize the importance of the Arts, of creative, imaginative thought or practice, as one of the factors that allowed for their very survival. By removing the Arts from the studies of students who might need it most, by making assumptions about who is and is not capable of such “higher level” thought, we may truly be, as a society, leaving our best and brightest far behind.

Submitted December, 2011 to *The Poor Aren't the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsman chapter proposal
accepted January, 2012

What is a White Girl Like Me Doing in a Reflective Place Like This?

Chapter Proposal (Turning Inward: Exploring Bias and Socialization, intersections of race and class, reflection on reading Ruby Payne)

Wendy Zagray Warren, 7th grade Language Arts teacher, Columbia Falls Schools,
Columbia Falls, Montana

wendywarren@yahoo.com ; wendyZW@sd6.k12.mt.us 406-253-1990

I am a White, middle class, heterosexual woman with a Christian background. There are many teachers like me in schools across our nation. I grew up seeing myself and my world as “normal,” a view confirmed by everything around me—on T.V., in movies, advertisements and textbooks. This chapter would focus on what it has taken to shake me to my core—to turn me inside out—as I come to realize that I *do* think, speak and write from a certain position in the world, that it is in almost every way a place of privilege, and that noticing my own position in relationship to others has been crucial to my development as a teacher and a person.

The chapter would begin with images of me as a seven year old, pulling my feet from the mud with each step as I walked barefoot between the tents erected on the mall in Washington, D.C. in what came to be known as Resurrection City. This was the protest against poverty organized by Martin Luther King, Jr. before he was killed, and my father, in a show of loyalty to King's ideals, decided that our family should travel from our home in Ohio to attend. That the focus of King's work had expanded from issues of race to issues of poverty demonstrates the depth of his understanding that, due to the history of racial apartheid in our country, race and class are so closely linked that they must be examined together. This image would act as the backdrop to the learning journey that has brought me to a place of understanding that until I recognize my own social position—understanding that both my race and social class impact my assumptions as a teacher, I will have a hard time reaching each student in my classroom.

Despite my early surface exposure to these issues, it was easiest for my thinking to stay fixed in my White, middle class world all the way through college and on into the first fifteen years of my teaching career. Then Montana passed an educational mandate called Indian Education for All, setting me on a course of personal growth that will continue the rest of my life. Quoted in *Stirring Up Justice*, by Jessica Singer Early, Sandra Lopez writes, “Once you've experienced one other way of seeing, you begin to realize there are many different ways to describe the universe, many different ways to transmit knowledge.” Through my work with Montana Writing Project, I had an opportunity to facilitate four years of Summer Institutes in Browning, Montana, on the Blackfeet Nation. We shared stories of our lives, and for the first time, I heard stories of people's lives that were incrementally different from my own. Gradually, I came to see that there are many ways of knowing....of living on this land. My perspective of the world is not the “right” one—it is one among many. I came to learn about government policies, past and present, that continue their stranglehold on some, while purposefully privileging others. And I am among the privileged.

I am embarrassed that it took forty years of living to finally reach this point of realization. Yet, due to divisions that prevail and grow deeper in our country, reflected in neighborhoods and schools segregated by both race and class, it was easy for a “White girl like me” to remain

ignorant of the experience of others who don't fit my privileged profile. And until we, the privileged, come to know an image of this country that is like a finely cut prism, each cut representing a different way of looking at the world...nothing will change.

And why should it change? Because we live in a world where someone like me can read a book like Ruby Payne's *Understanding Poverty* and think they are reading truth—that White, middle class values are the “right,” despite plenty of evidence that the systems we've had in place since this nation's founding are failing. They are failing the earth, they are failing the vast majority of the country's population, and now they are failing the rest of the world as well. Someone's gain is always another's loss. My privilege results in someone else's sacrifice. Only when I come to see these truths do I have choices...about the country I want, for myself and for my students. Only when my students learn to see this way will they have choices. These days, I am teaching for the future I'd like to see seven generations from now—a way of thinking I learned from some very wise people I have had the good fortune to come t

Submitted December, 2011 to *The Poor Aren't the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsman chapter proposal
accepted January, 2012

Words as Weapons: Dehumanization as a Social Norm in Schools

Chapter Proposal (Teaching Against Deficit Ideology and the Culture of Poverty)

Wendy Zagray Warren, 7th grade Language Arts teacher, Columbia Falls Schools,
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This chapter would begin in my classroom, at the moment the subject of poverty comes barging in the door. We have just studied the series of events in Nazi Germany leading up to the Nazi Holocaust. We have discussed the ultimate dehumanization. Students, in discussion, wrestle with the human capacity for love and for hate. Attempting to bridge the gap between past and present, I spontaneously ask my students if there are people dehumanized in our school. What happens next floors me. A list comes rapid fire, without hesitation, and seemingly without shame. I haven't heard this name-calling in our hallways. Apparently students know to hide these hurtful labels, and the behaviors that accompany their use, from the watchful eye of teachers.

Words like "Mexican" and "Jew" appear on the list, surprising in that we have very few Latina/o people in our school, and very few people of Jewish faith. The list grows a page long. The word "hobo" appears. I don't differentiate it from the other words at first, as I try to absorb the shock that clearly these labels and their use as weapons reflect what my students see and hear in the broader culture. Equally clear is that they have been here, under the surface, all along; I just haven't thought to ask. The list seems rooted in a mire that includes an educational lack--of historical background, of an understanding of current events, of examination of self and society--here within these schoolhouse walls.

A few days later a student uses the word "hobo" arises again, casually, disparagingly, in the midst of a class discussion. Unlike other labels on the list, there is apparently no taboo in the use of this word. I ask questions, try to understand the meaning my students attach to this word. To them, "hobo" is synonymous with a person who is homeless. The connotation is negative—a "hobo" is a person to be feared as well as scorned. As my students talk, I realize I have some serious thinking to do about how to address this misconception. Most puzzling of all is the fact that this is a community where many people *are* poor. Sitting in that classroom, perhaps even leading the discussion, are students perpetuating a stereotype that might easily be used to describe people sitting in this room.

As a teacher, I have a choice, and I choose to act—to teach against these clear misconceptions about people living in poverty. The next section of the chapter would describe this sequence of learning activities. I come to class the next day carrying the illustrated book *Fly Away Home*, by Eve Bunting. I read it aloud, trusting it will create an entry point for discussion. In the book, a boy and his father live in an airport. Many common stereotypes are broken in this story, including a scene where the boy's father boards a bus for his daily commute to work.

Next, we focus on the unequal distribution of wealth in our country, using an activity called "Ten Chairs of Inequality," creating a visual representation of the amount of wealth held by the top 1% in our country. This conversation is enhanced by the events around the Occupy Wall Street movement. Then we read Byrd Baylor's book *The Table Where Rich People Sit*, as an entry point to considering the many ways wealth can be measured, so my students will realize

that individual values as well as the values of a society, can be consciously chosen, not just learned.

This series of experiences leads us back to the initial issue: the dehumanization, in our school and in the greater culture, of people living in poverty. The chapter will conclude with words from my students--those who find their attitudes shifting, their empathy increasing--toward members of their community, their own families, and maybe even themselves.

Submitted December, 2011 to *The Poor Aren't the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsman 3 chapter proposals

Initial email response

Wendy

All three of these look wonderful...Paul is out of the country. We will be looking at all proposals in January and early February. I am sure one of these will fit...I like all of them.

Julie

<Warren Turning Inward Chapter proposal.docx><Warren Words as Weapons chapter proposal.docx><Warren Educational Assumptions and the Opportunity Gap Chapter Proposal.docx>

From: Paul C. Gorski <gorski@edchange.org>

To: wendyzwarren@yahoo.com

Sent: Tuesday, January 24, 2012 10:46 AM

Subject: Your proposal review

Dear Wendy:

Thanks again for submitting your chapter proposal for our book, *"The Poor" Aren't the Problem: Insisting on Class Equity in Schools*. We were thrilled to receive more than 65 chapter proposals—many more than we had anticipated!

After much consideration and discussion among the co-editors and input from John vonKnorring, our editor at Stylus Press (mostly regarding length restrictions for our manuscript), we had to make some tough decisions about which proposals we could include. Unfortunately, we did not select one of your three proposals: "Educational Assumptions."

You probably have heard from Julie by now that we'd like to run your other two pieces, right? Please note that our decision not to run that third piece is not necessarily a commentary on the quality of the proposal or the importance of the ideas in it. We had to decline many quality proposals either because they did not quite fit the topic of the book (as by not focusing explicitly on class and poverty concerns) or the spirit of the book (as by being framed more as a research journal article than a book chapter).

Please feel free to contact Julie Landsman (jlandsman@goldengate.net) or Paul Gorski (gorski@edchange.org) if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Julie and Paul

Dear Wendy,

We are writing to congratulate you on having your proposal accepted for the book *The Poor Are Not The Problem*, edited by Paul Gorski and Julie Landsman. We feel the abstract you sent matches our concerns regarding educating students and staff around issues of poverty and equity in our schools. We are excited about this book and are pleased to have you a part of it.

We would like you to take two of the three you sent us: 1) What is A White Girl...., and 2) Words As Weapons. In the first can you make sure you focus on class (race can be included

too). These are both perfect for the theme of the book. The third one is a great topic by not quite a fit for this book.

We would like to have the completed chapter by July 1st, 2012. We are asking that these chapters be no longer than 15 pages. If they are shorter, that is fine. If they are longer we need to work with you on that. It needs to be formatted according to Stylus guidelines. Here is a link to those guidelines.

<http://www.styluspub.com/info/guidelines.aspx>

Look especially for the section on “text and typography”.

Sorry I did not get this out to you on Sunday. I thought I had sent it off. Looking at the chapters we have accepted in their entirety, I believe we have an important book here. Thank you for your patience.

Julie

If you have any questions please feel free to get in touch with Julie

Landsman, jlandsman@goldengate.net, or Paul Gorski, gorski@edchange.org

Submitted January, 2012 *Cutbank Literary Journal* three poems rejected April, 2012
St. Francis Cathedral, Missoula, Montana, 2011
Al's and Vic's
On the Banks of the Bear River

April 6, 2012

Dear Wendy,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to read your poems. While we very much enjoyed your work, after careful consideration, we've decided we don't have a place for this manuscript. We hope you'll send us more work in the future.

This is not our customary rejection. We hope you'll keep us in mind, and look forward to reading more from you.

Kind regards,

Melissa Mylchreest
Cutbank Literary Journal

Submitted January, 2012 *English Journal* four poems submitted for themed issue “Character and Characters,” acknowledgement of receipt; no response/reply
Assignment
What You See
Jumping
Stereotype Buster

Thank you for submitting to the English Journal

This EJPoetry@nl.edu address is monitored by Katie McMahon of the NLU Library. Submissions are forwarded to the Poetry Editor without your identifying information. All work is blind reviewed.

If you have questions or otherwise need to correspond with the Poetry Editor directly, please write to Anne McCrary Sullivan at ASullivan@nl.edu. Please do not send submissions or cover letters to this address.

The general editor of EJ, Ken Lindblom, has asked that poems reflect in some way the thematic concerns announced for each issue. The poetry editor is free to interpret these themes broadly. Upcoming themes, deadlines and details appear in each issue of EJ and at the NCTE website. "General Interest" poems are not considered.

You may expect a response within two to four months, sooner if possible. Thank you for thinking of the English Journal.

Submitted March, 2012 *Whitefish Review* three poems submitted for "The Wild Issue,"
rejected
June Morning
Diamond Dust
Life in Four Directions

May 2, 2012 RE: warren_poetry_1June2Diamonds3Directions
Dear Wendy Warren,

Our editorial team has taken great care in reviewing your submission. I am sorry that we are unable to accept it for publication in issue #11 and we hope you will be able to place it in another publication. With many hundreds of submissions, the acceptance rate is very low. Often, the narrative flow we end up developing for our journal does not work with work submitted. Truly, we were particularly impressed with the quality of submissions for this issue.

Please continue to submit your work for future reading periods. We know this is a difficult process for artists of all types. Keep having fun with your art!

Issue #11 features the fifth installment in the "conversations" series, which pairs up environmental writer Brooke Williams and philosopher, legendary climber, and essayist Jack Turner as they candidly discuss why wildness is essential to human survival as a species today.

We invite you to join us for the unveiling of the 11th issue of *Whitefish Review* on Saturday, June 2, 2012 at 6:30 in the evening at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake. The evening will feature authors David James Duncan and Brooke Williams, young author Sarah Ward, poetry performances by Neal Brown, Max Hjortsberg, and Ron McFarland, and live music. We'll have food, beer, wine, whisky, and water and will raise our voices in howls to celebrate wildness.

Please consider a subscription to our journal. It would really help us in this wild venture: <http://www.whitefishreview.org/subscribe.htm>

Keep working and pushing your art.

All best,

Brian Schott
Founding Editor
Whitefish Review
406-261-6190
www.whitefishreview.org